HUNTER×HUNTER

ハンター ハンター

26

SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED

Story & Art by
YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

冨樫義博

I learned how to swim after I turned 30.

Yoshihiro Togashi

Yoshihiro Togashi's manga career began in 1986 at the age of 20, when he won the coveted Osamu Tezuka Award for new manga artists. He debuted in the Japanese **Weekly Shonen Jump** magazine in 1989 with the romantic comedy **Tende Shôwaru Cupid**. From 1990 to 1994 he wrote and drew the hit manga **YuYu Hakusho**, which was followed by the dark comedy science-fiction series **Level E**, and finally this adventure series, **Hunter x Hunter**, available from VIZ Media's SHONEN JUMP Advanced imprint. In 1999 he married the manga artist Naoko Takeuchi.

HUNTER X HUNTER Volume 26
SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY
YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

English Adaptation & Translation/Lillian Olsen
Touch-up Art & Lettering/Mark McMurray & HudsonYards
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RATED T+ FOR OLDER TEEN

PARENTAL ADVISORY
HUNTER X HUNTER is rated T+ for Older Teen and is recommended for ages 16 and up. Contains realistic violence and mature language.

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SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED
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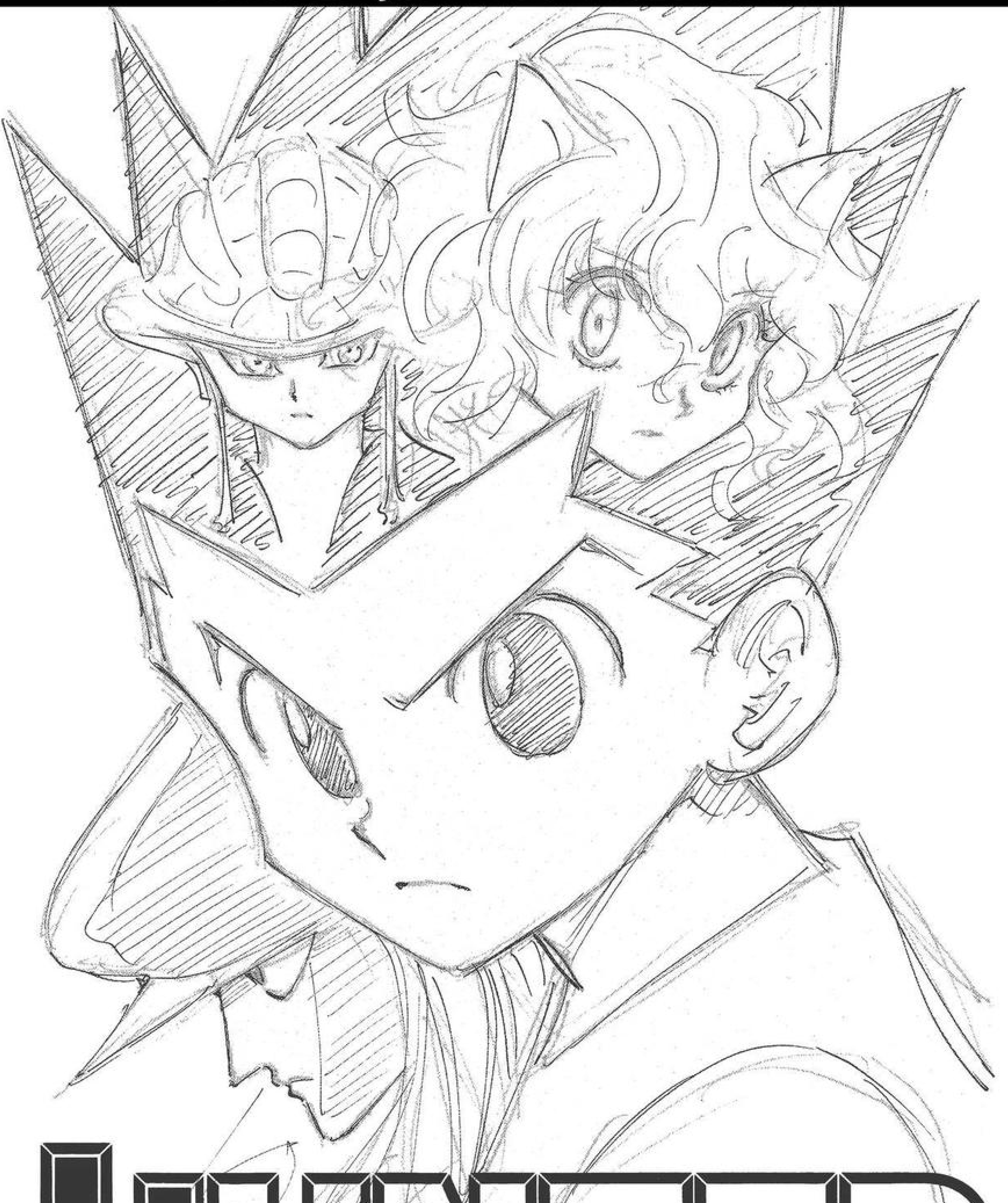
SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED MANGA



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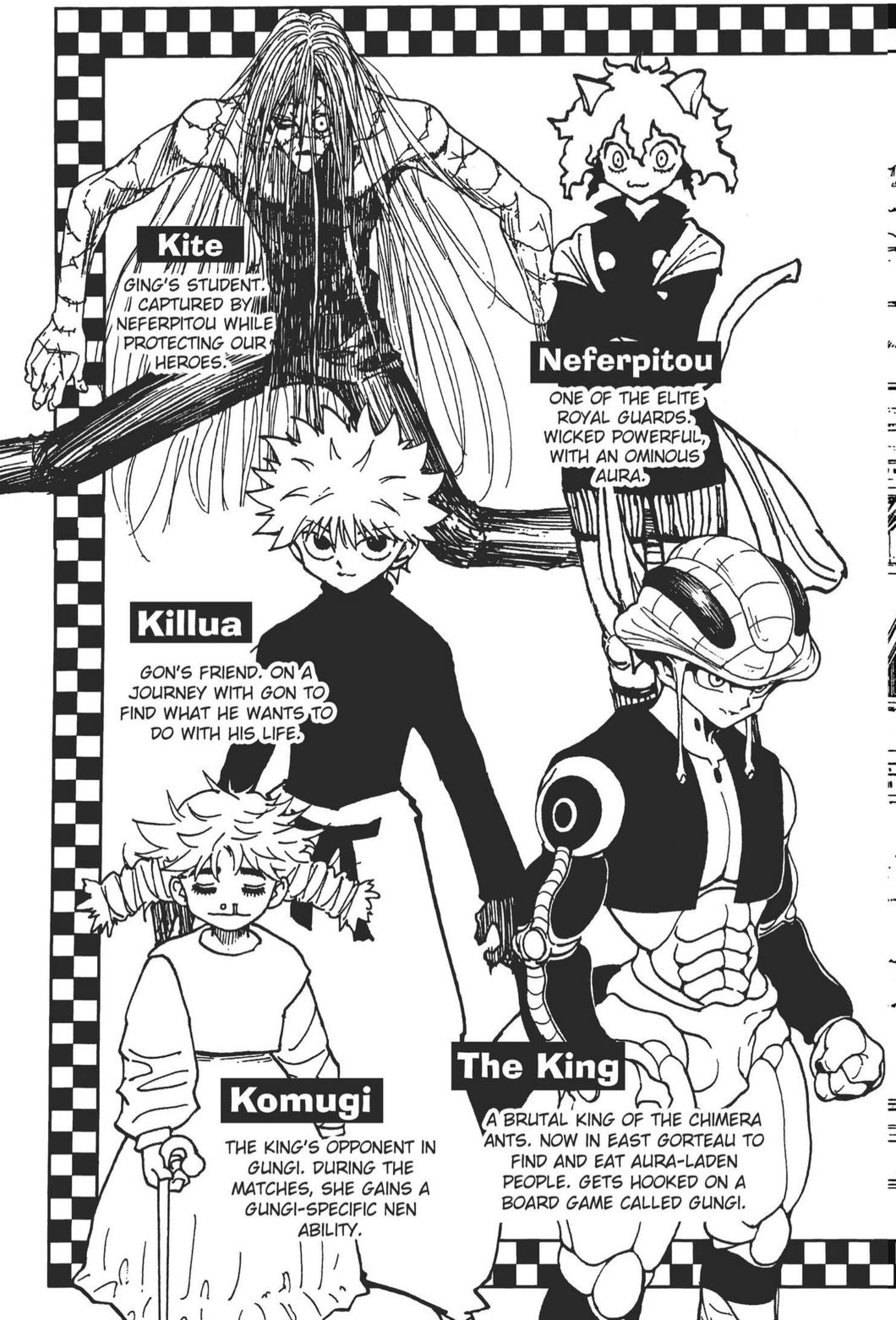
Volume 26



Kite

GING'S STUDENT. CAPTURED BY NEFERPITOU WHILE PROTECTING OUR HEROES.

Neferpitou

ONE OF THE ELITE ROYAL GUARDS. WICKED POWERFUL, WITH AN OMINOUS AURA.

Killua

GON'S FRIEND. ON A JOURNEY WITH GON TO FIND WHAT HE WANTS TO DO WITH HIS LIFE.

The King

A BRUTAL KING OF THE CHIMERA ANTS. NOW IN EAST GORTEAU TO FIND AND EAT AURA-LADEN PEOPLE. GETS HOOKED ON A BOARD GAME CALLED GUNGI.

Komugi

THE KING'S OPPONENT IN GUNGI. DURING THE MATCHES, SHE GAINS A GUNGI-SPECIFIC NEN ABILITY.

Gon

OUR EAGER HERO. NOW A HUNTER, HE'S ON A SEARCH TO REUNITE WITH HIS FATHER!

The Story Thus Far

GON DREAMS OF BEING A HUNTER LIKE THE FATHER HE BARELY REMEMBERS, THE GREAT GING FREECSS. HE PASSES THE HIGHLY SELECTIVE LICENSING EXAM, BUT FINDING GING WILL BE EVEN HARDER.

GON REUNITES WITH GING'S OLD COMRADE KITE AND STARTS ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE IN NGL, WHERE THE VICIOUS CHIMERA ANTS HAVE BUILT THEIR NEST. AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE FORMIDABLE NEFERPITOU RESULTS IN KITE'S CAPTURE. FINALLY, THE ANT KING IS BORN–A VICIOUS CREATURE WHO WOULD EVEN EAT HIS OWN KIND. THE KING LEAVES THE NEST AND TAKES OVER THE REPUBLIC OF EAST GORTEAU. KITE IS EVENTUALLY RECOVERED BY THE HUNTERS, BUT HE IS NO LONGER THE MAN HE USED TO BE... AND GON VOWS TO TURN HIM BACK.

OUR HEROES STORM INTO THE PALACE IN EAST GORTEAU TO DEFEAT THE KING. WHILE THEY CONFRONT THE CHIMERA ANTS, KOMUGI LIES WOUNDED AND BLEEDING...

HUNTER×HUNTER
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Volume 26

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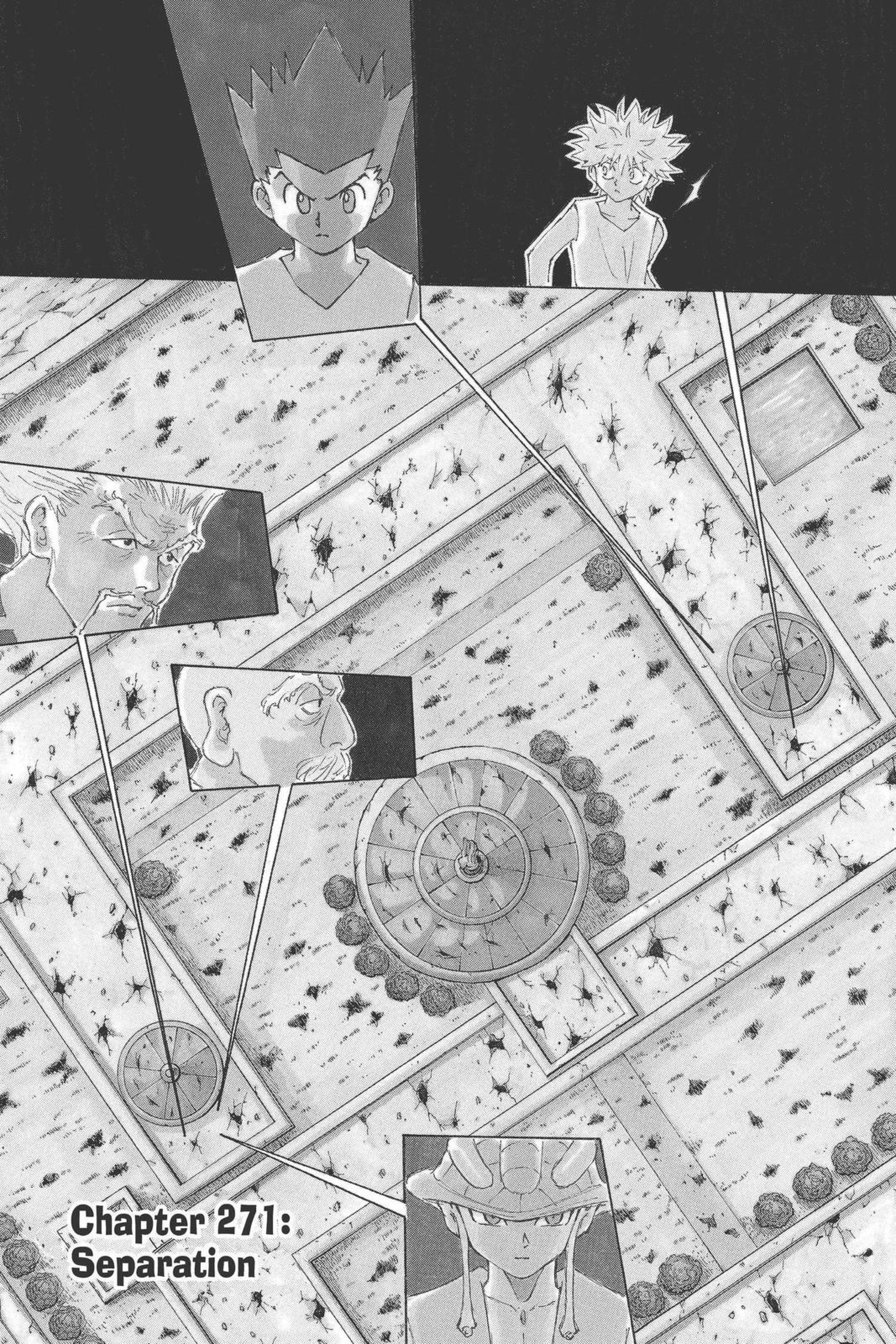
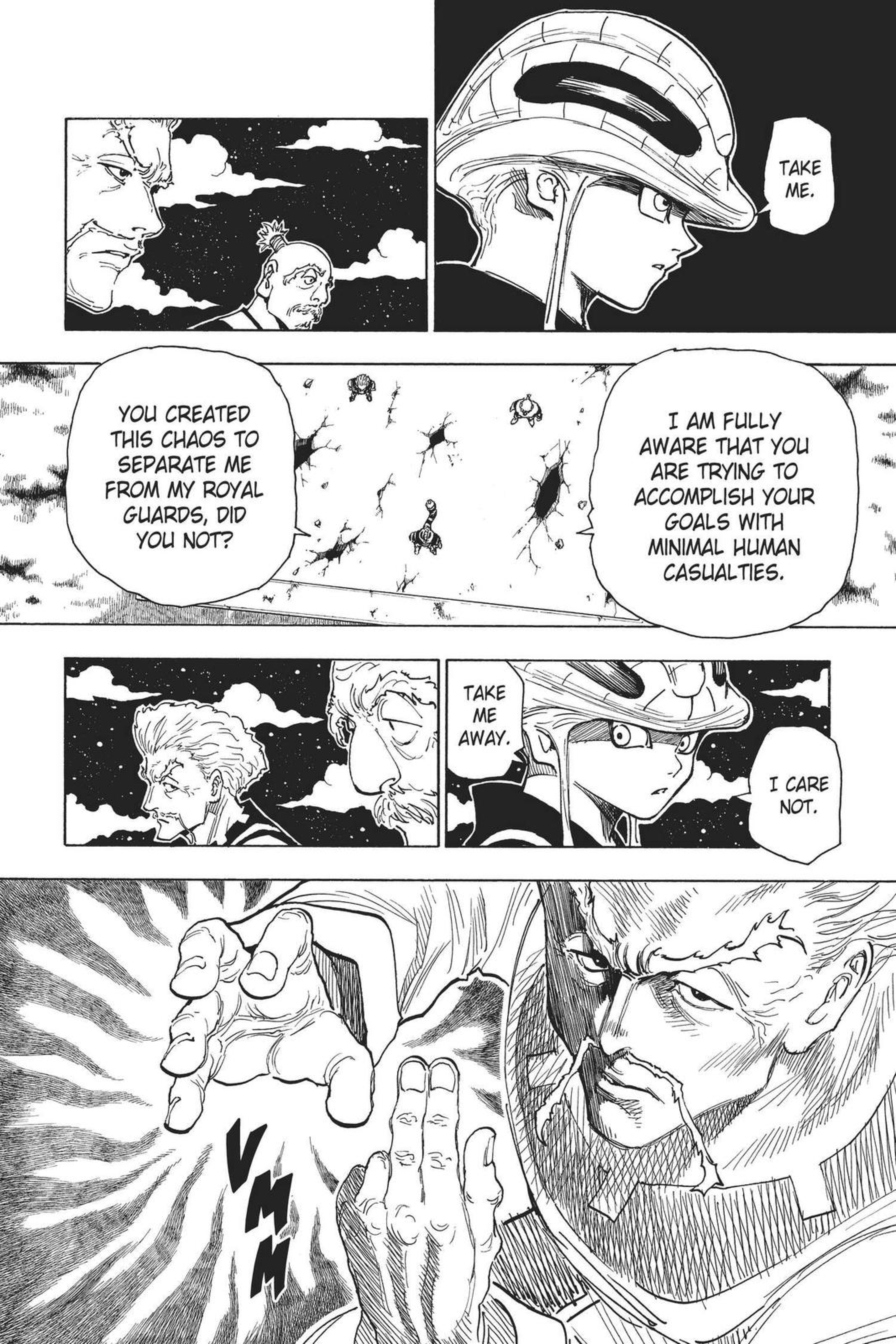
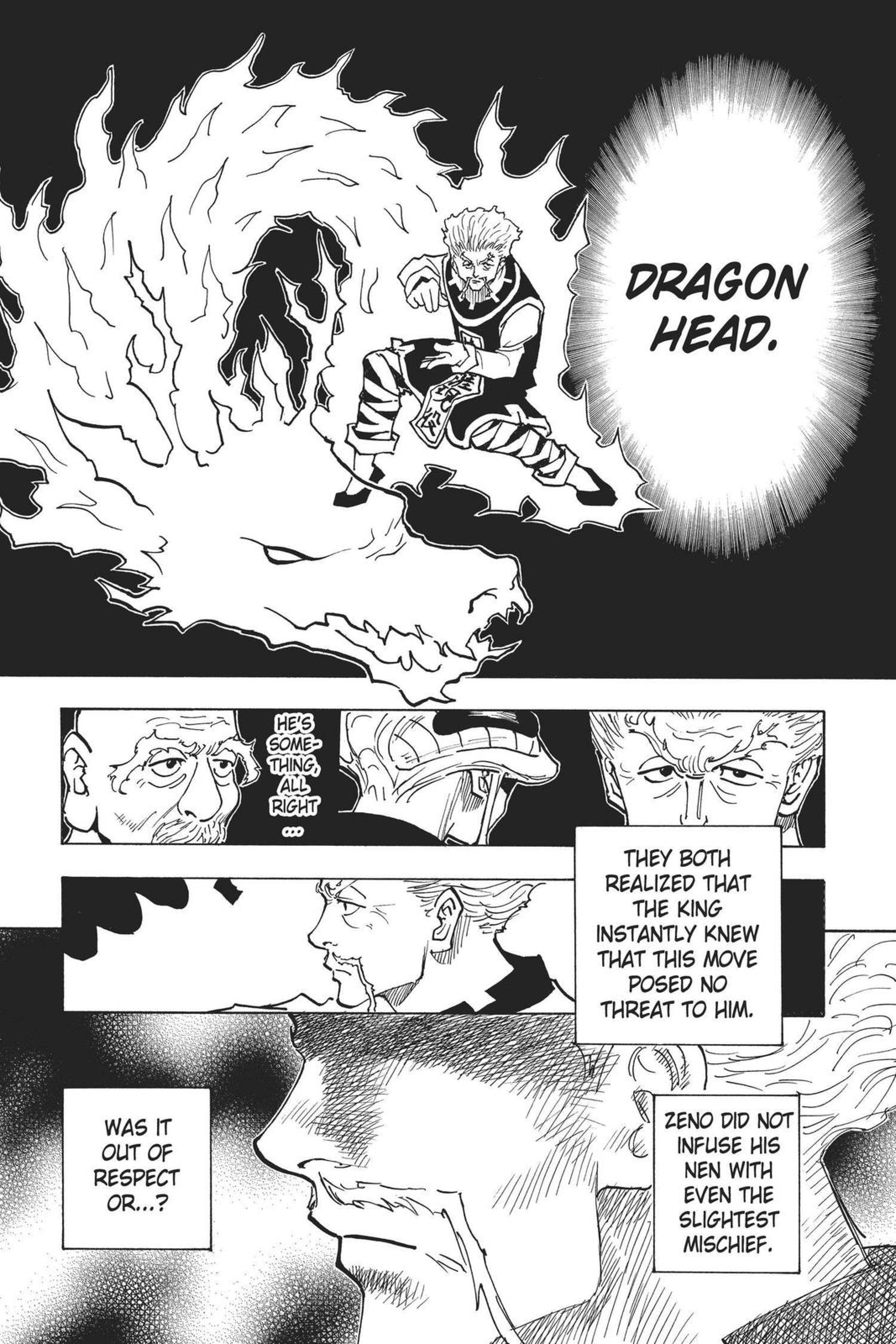
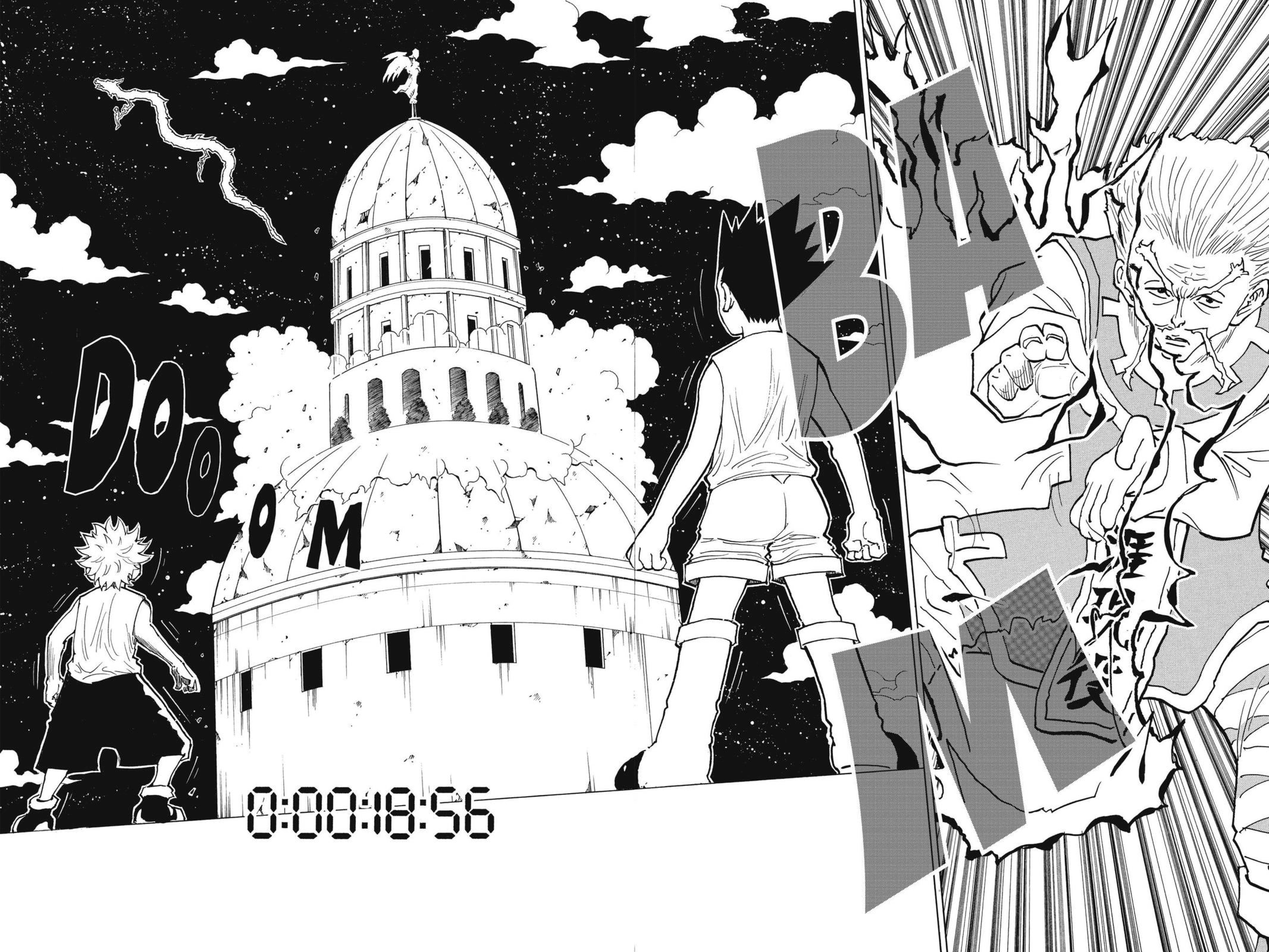
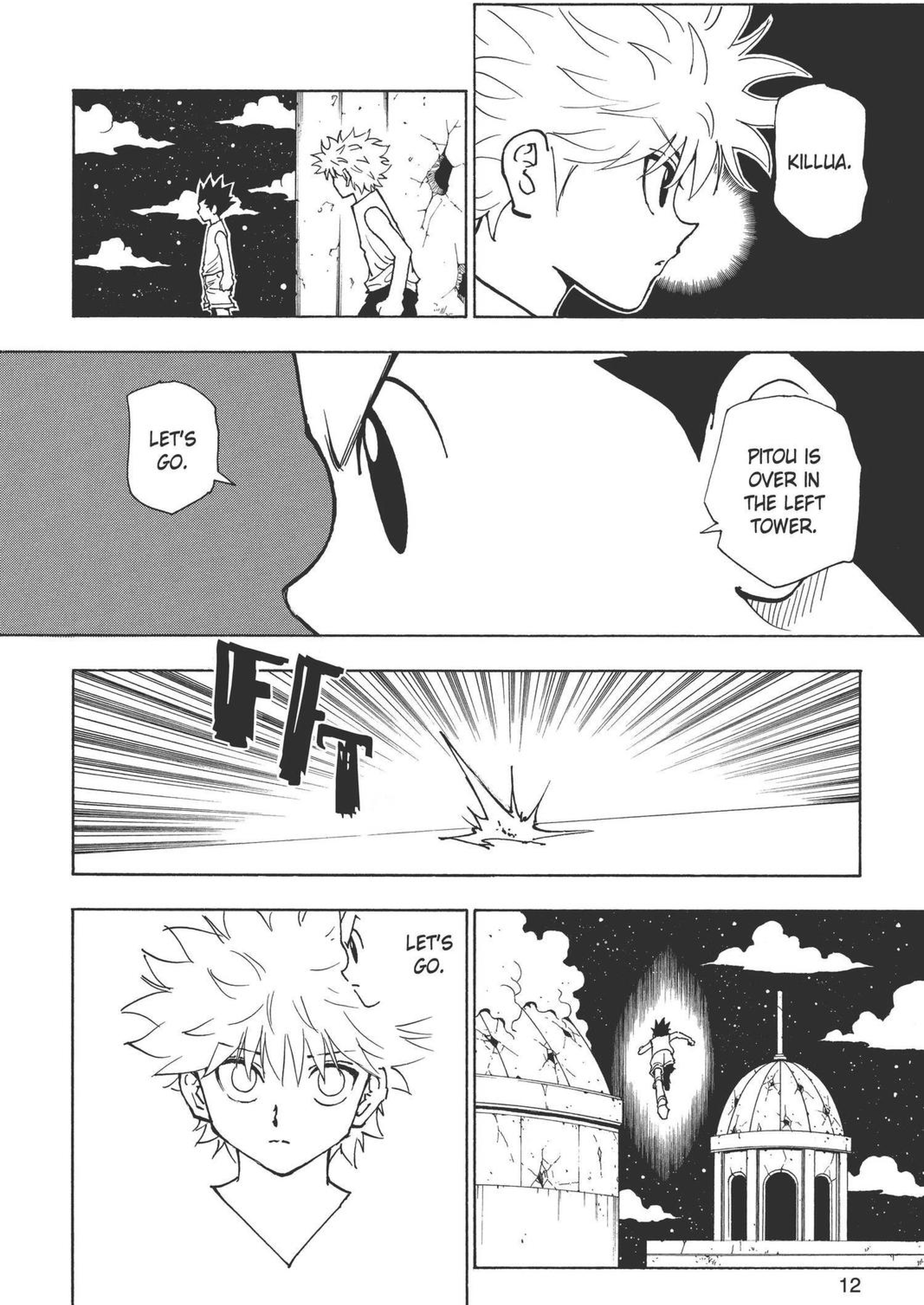


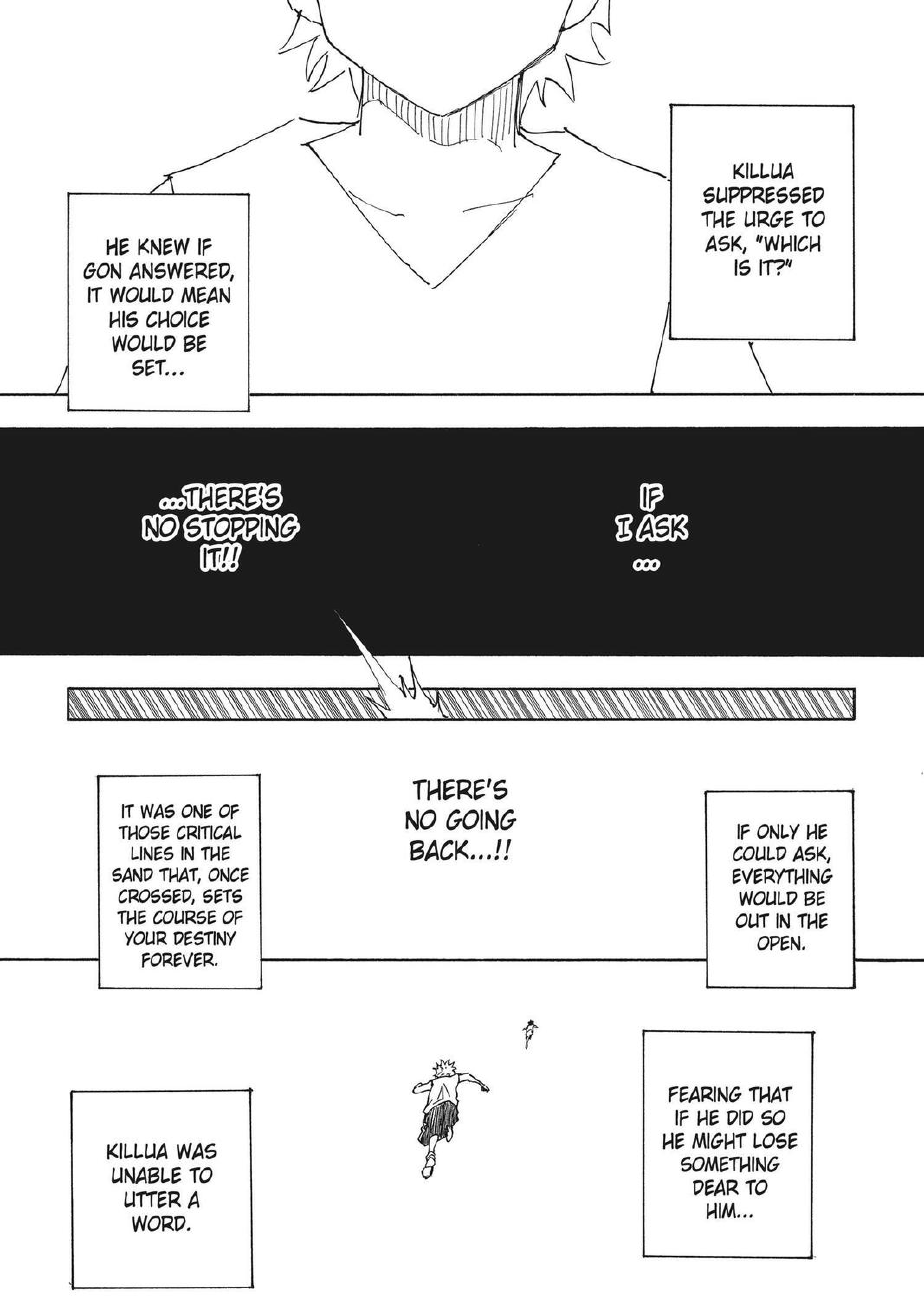
Chapter 271: Separation

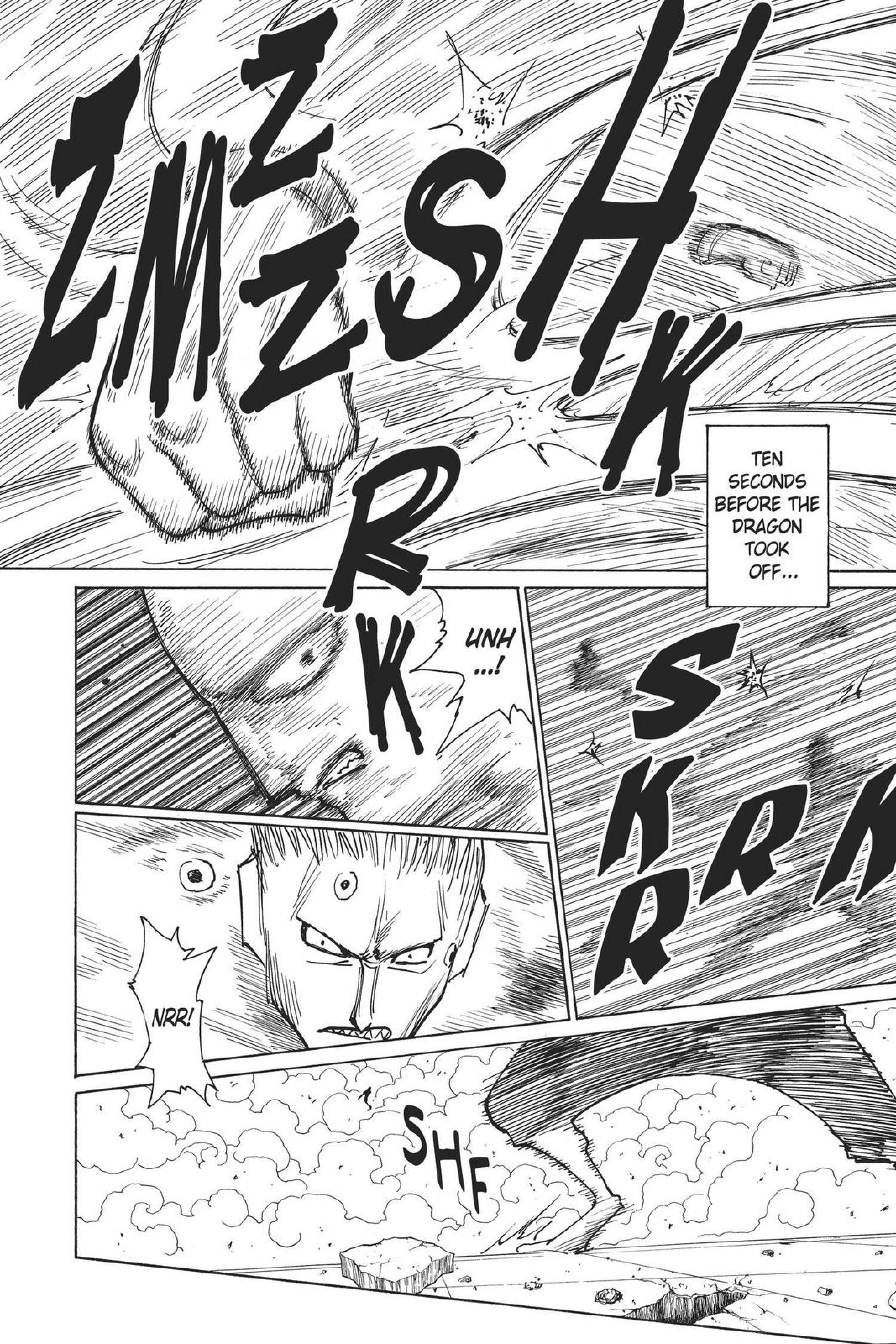

TAKE ME.
I AM FULLY AWARE THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR GOALS WITH MINIMAL HUMAN CASUALTIES.
YOU CREATED THIS CHAOS TO SEPARATE ME FROM MY ROYAL GUARDS, DID YOU NOT?
I CARE NOT.
TAKE ME AWAY.
VMM

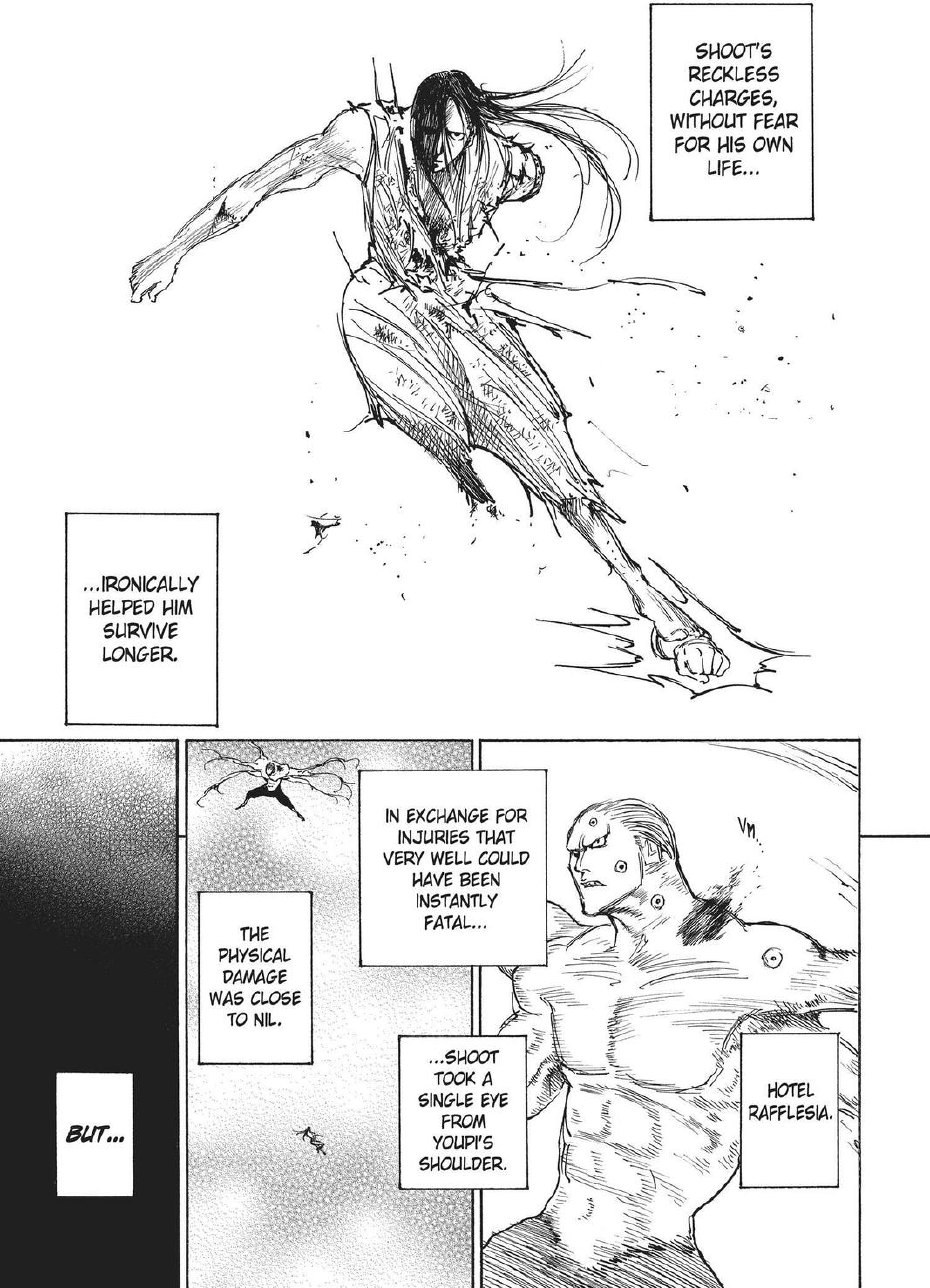

DRAGON HEAD.
HE'S SOMETHING, ALL RIGHT...
THEY BOTH REALIZED THAT THE KING INSTANTLY KNEW THAT THIS MOVE POSED NO THREAT TO HIM.
ZENO DID NOT INFUSE HIS NEN WITH EVEN THE SLIGHTEST MISCHIEF.
WAS IT OUT OF RESPECT OR...?

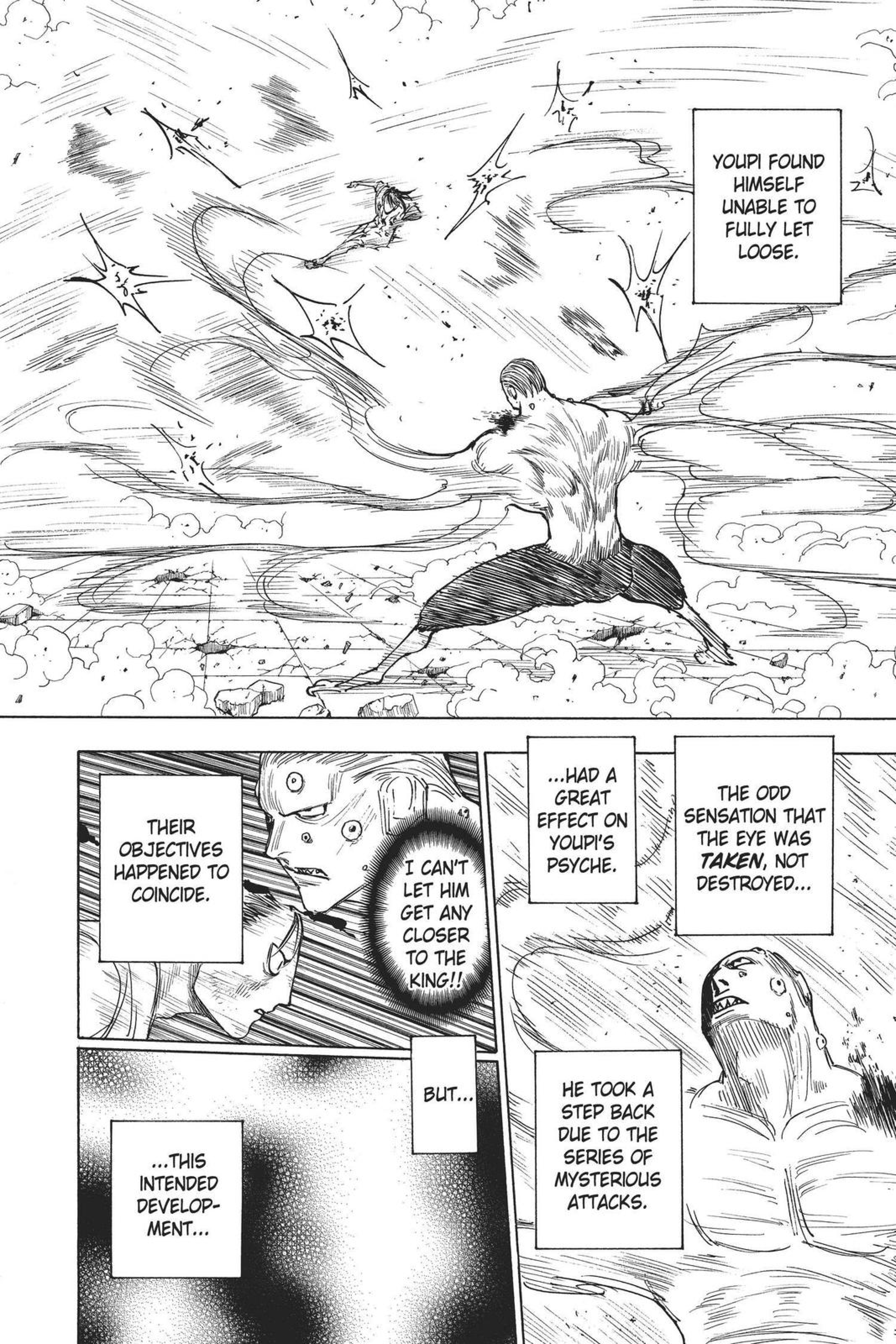

BAM
DOOOM
0:00:18:56

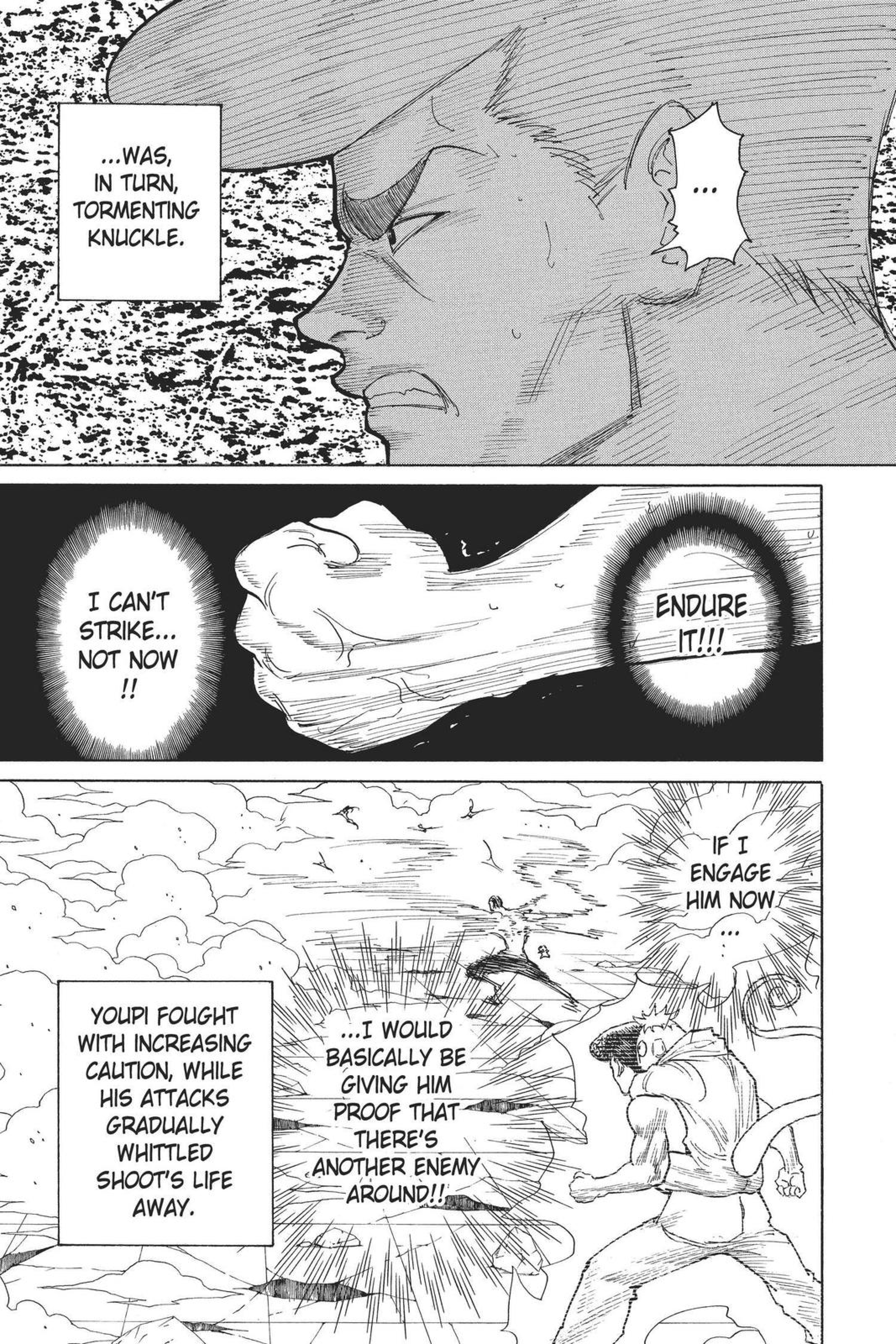

KILLUA.
PITOU IS OVER IN THE LEFT TOWER.
LET'S GO.
FFT
LET'S GO.

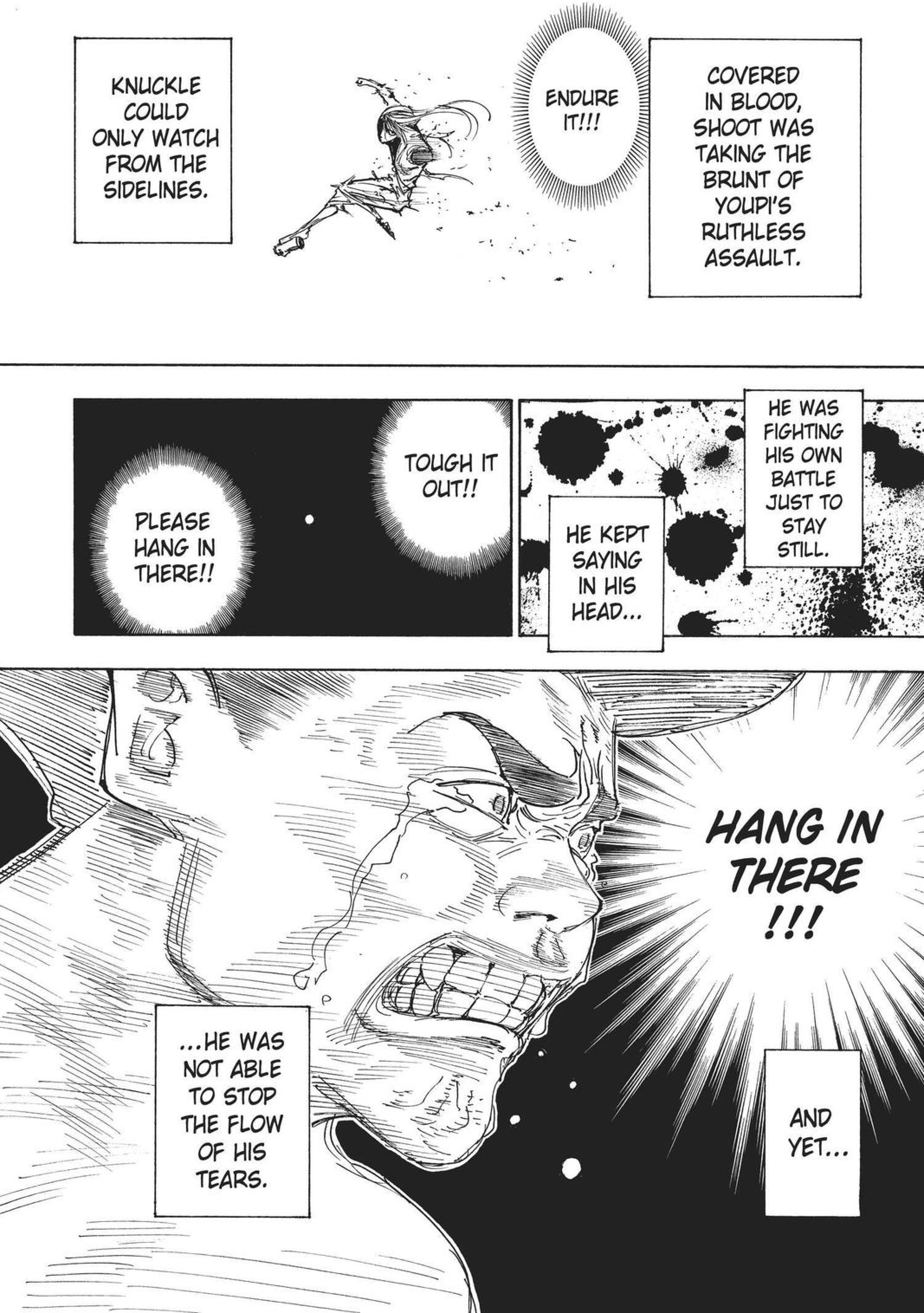

KILLUA SUPPRESSED THE URGE TO ASK, "WHICH IS IT?"
HE KNEW IF GON ANSWERED, IT WOULD MEAN HIS CHOICE WOULD BE SET...
IF I ASK...
...THERE'S NO STOPPING IT!!
IF ONLY HE COULD ASK, EVERYTHING WOULD BE OUT IN THE OPEN.
THERE'S NO GOING BACK...!!
IT WAS ONE OF THOSE CRITICAL LINES IN THE SAND THAT, ONCE CROSSED, SETS THE COURSE OF YOUR DESTINY FOREVER.
FEARING THAT IF HE DID SO HE MIGHT LOSE SOMETHING DEAR TO HIM...
KILLUA WAS UNABLE TO UTTER A WORD.

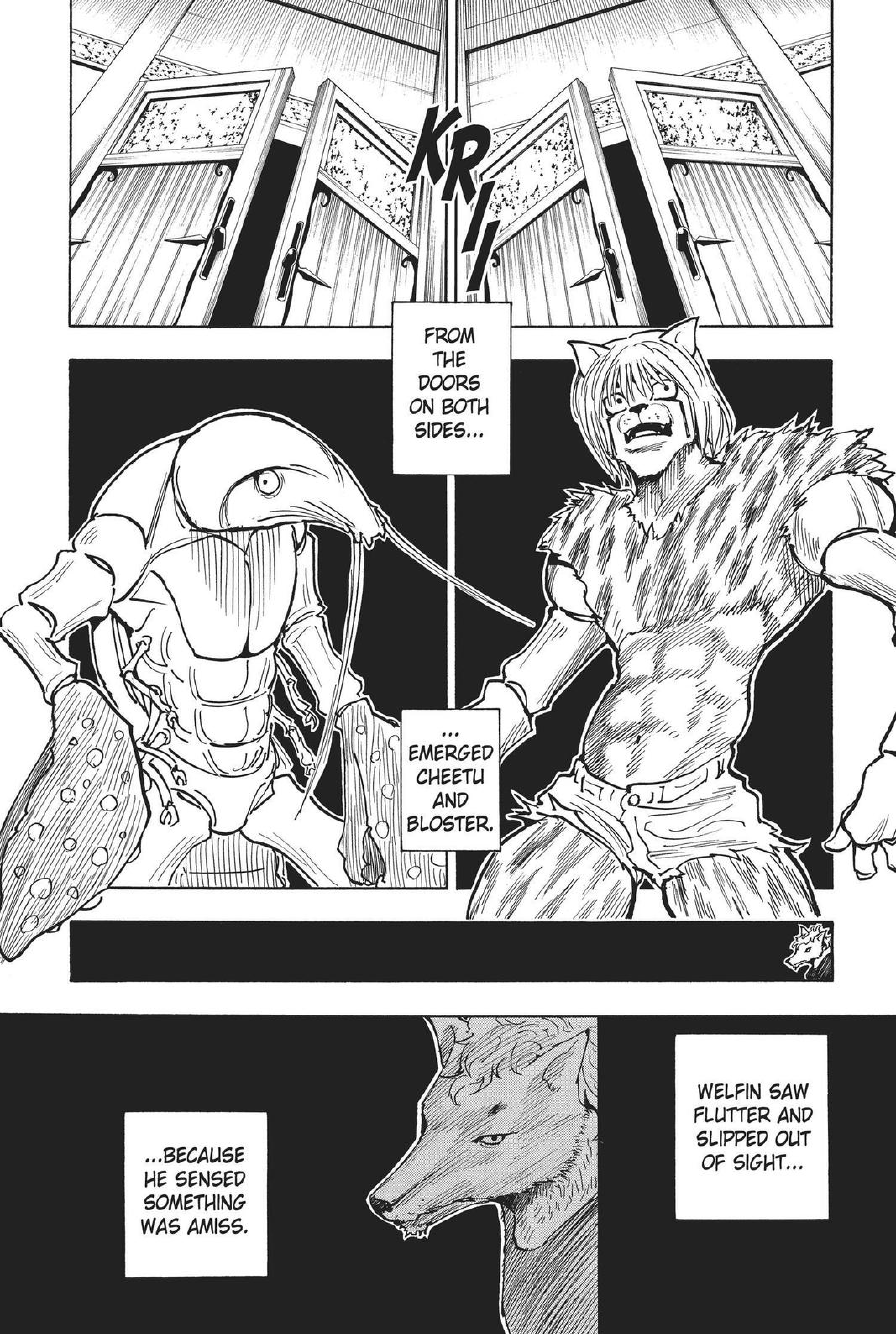

TEN SECONDS BEFORE THE DRAGON TOOK OFF...
ZMZZSHK
RK
UNH ...!
SKRRR
NRR!
SHF

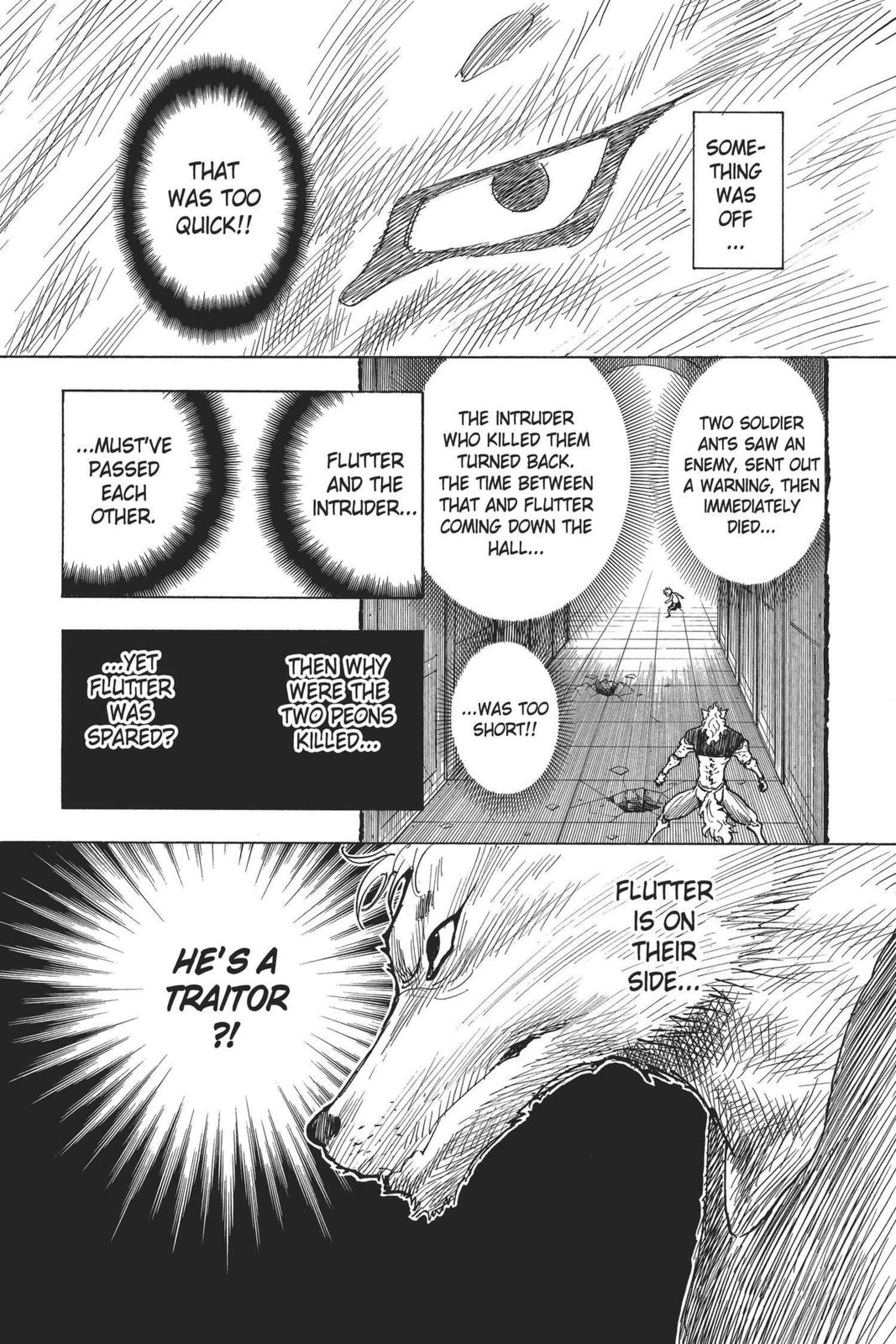

SHOOT'S RECKLESS CHARGES, WITHOUT FEAR FOR HIS OWN LIFE...
...IRONICALLY HELPED HIM SURVIVE LONGER.
HOTEL RAFFLESIA.
VM...
IN EXCHANGE FOR INJURIES THAT VERY WELL COULD HAVE BEEN INSTANTLY FATAL...
...SHOOT TOOK A SINGLE EYE FROM YOUPI'S SHOULDER.
THE PHYSICAL DAMAGE WAS CLOSE TO NIL.
BUT...

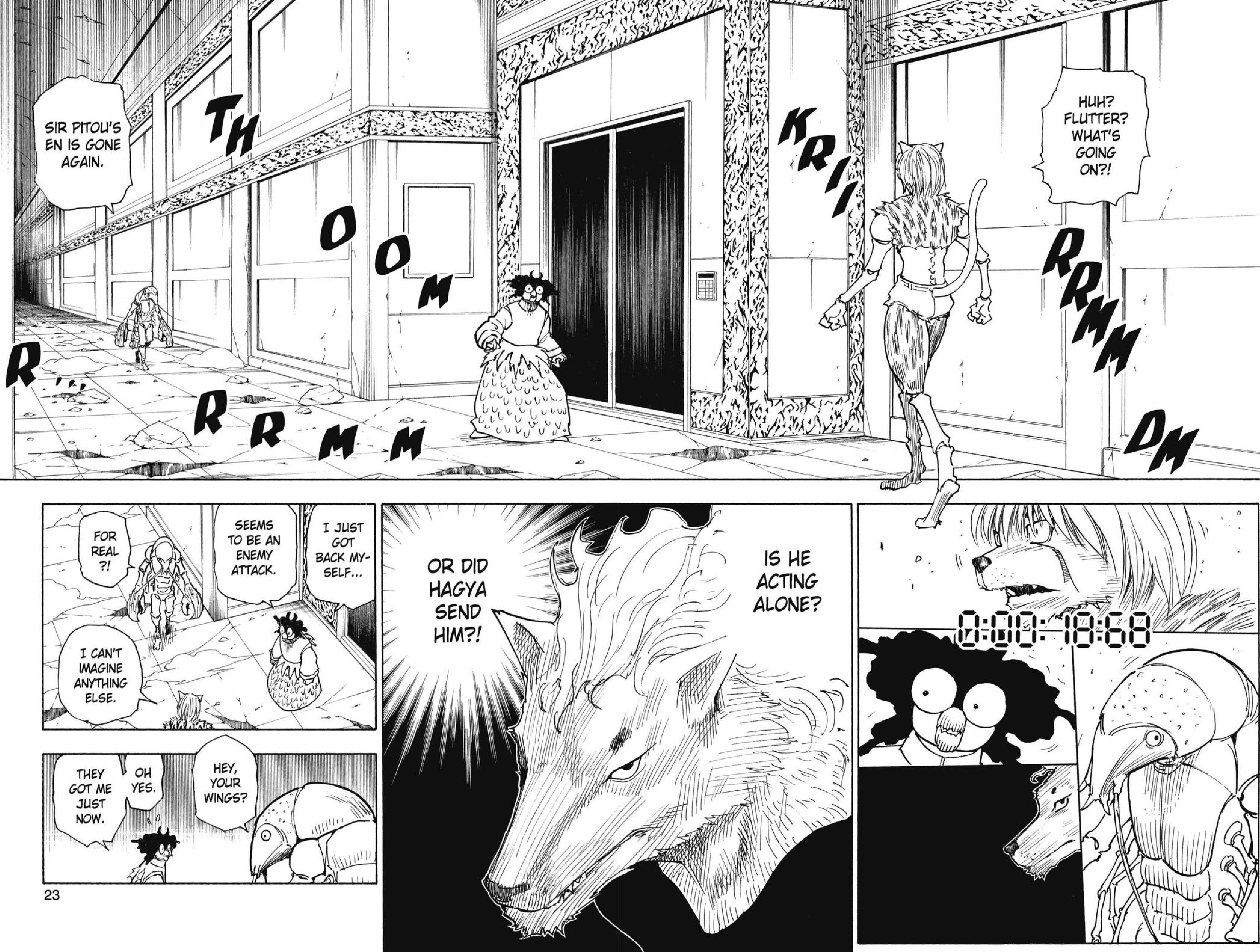

YOUPI FOUND HIMSELF UNABLE TO FULLY LET LOOSE.
THE ODD SENSATION THAT THE EYE WAS *TAKEN*, NOT DESTROYED...
...HAD A GREAT EFFECT ON YOUPI'S PSYCHE.
HE TOOK A STEP BACK DUE TO THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS ATTACKS.
I CAN'T LET HIM GET ANY CLOSER TO THE KING!!
THEIR OBJECTIVES HAPPENED TO COINCIDE.
BUT...
...THIS INTENDED DEVELOPMENT...

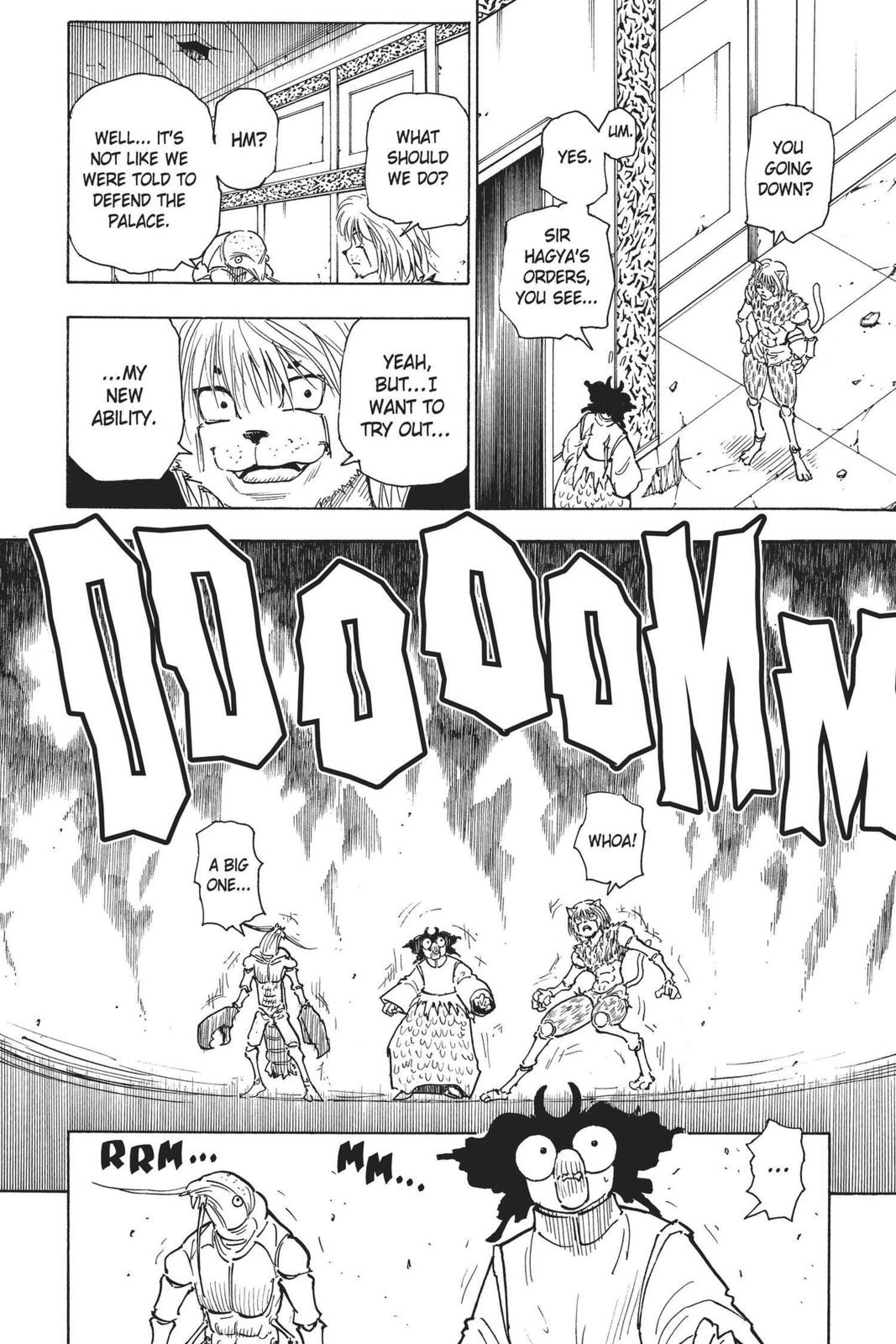

…
…WAS, IN TURN, TORMENTING KNUCKLE.
ENDURE IT!!!
I CAN'T STRIKE… NOT NOW!!
IF I ENGAGE HIM NOW…
…I WOULD BASICALLY BE GIVING HIM PROOF THAT THERE'S ANOTHER ENEMY AROUND!!
YOUPI FOUGHT WITH INCREASING CAUTION, WHILE HIS ATTACKS GRADUALLY WHITTLED SHOOT'S LIFE AWAY.

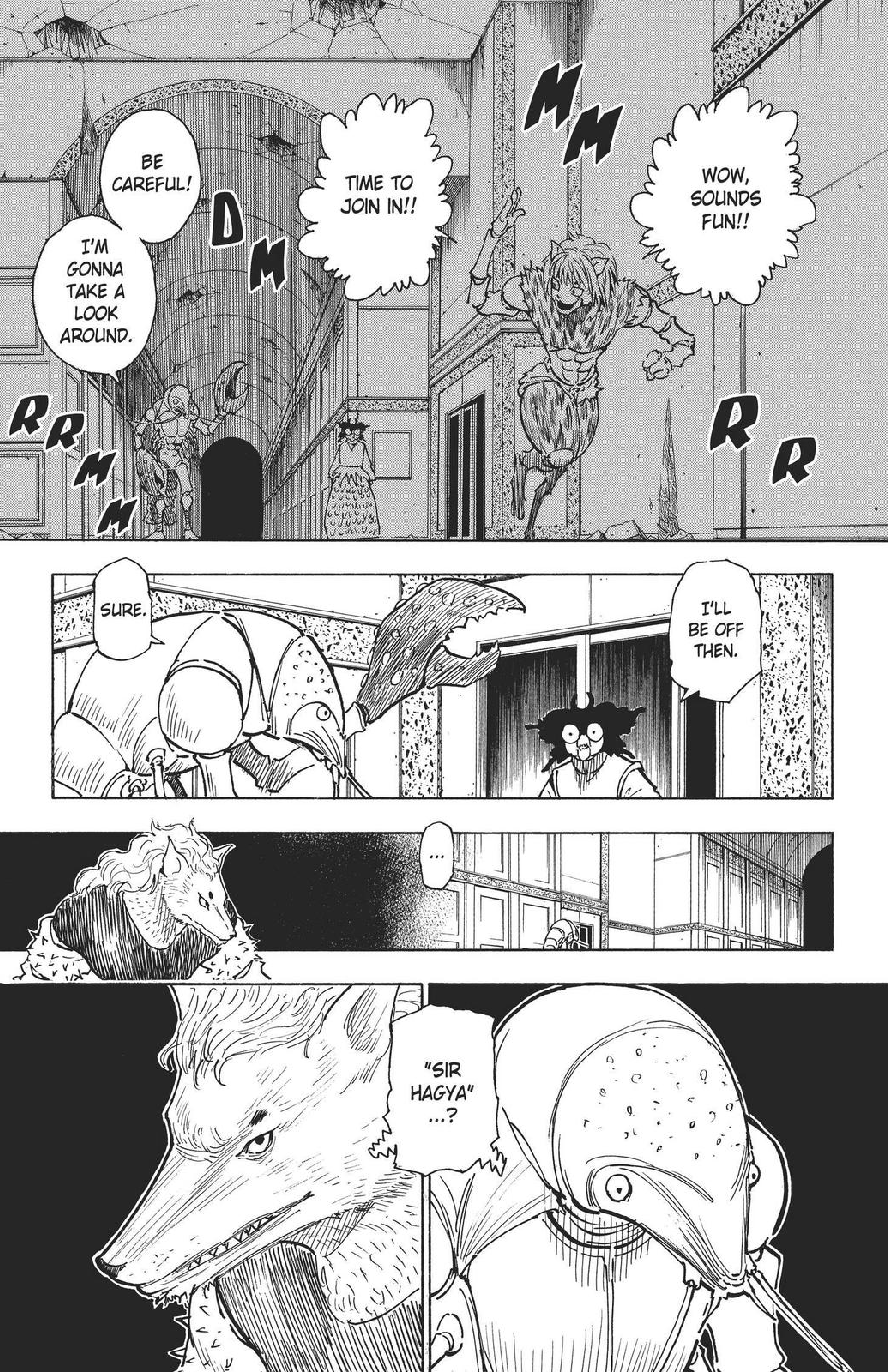

COVERED IN BLOOD, SHOOT WAS TAKING THE BRUNT OF YOUPI'S RUTHLESS ASSAULT.
ENDURE IT!!!
KNUCKLE COULD ONLY WATCH FROM THE SIDELINES.
HE WAS FIGHTING HIS OWN BATTLE JUST TO STAY STILL.
HE KEPT SAYING IN HIS HEAD...
TOUGH IT OUT!!
PLEASE HANG IN THERE!!
HANG IN THERE!!!
AND YET...
...HE WAS NOT ABLE TO STOP THE FLOW OF HIS TEARS.


KRII
FROM THE DOORS ON BOTH SIDES...
... EMERGED CHEETU AND BLOSTER.
WELFIN SAW FLUTTER AND SLIPPED OUT OF SIGHT...
...BECAUSE HE SENSED SOMETHING WAS AMISS.

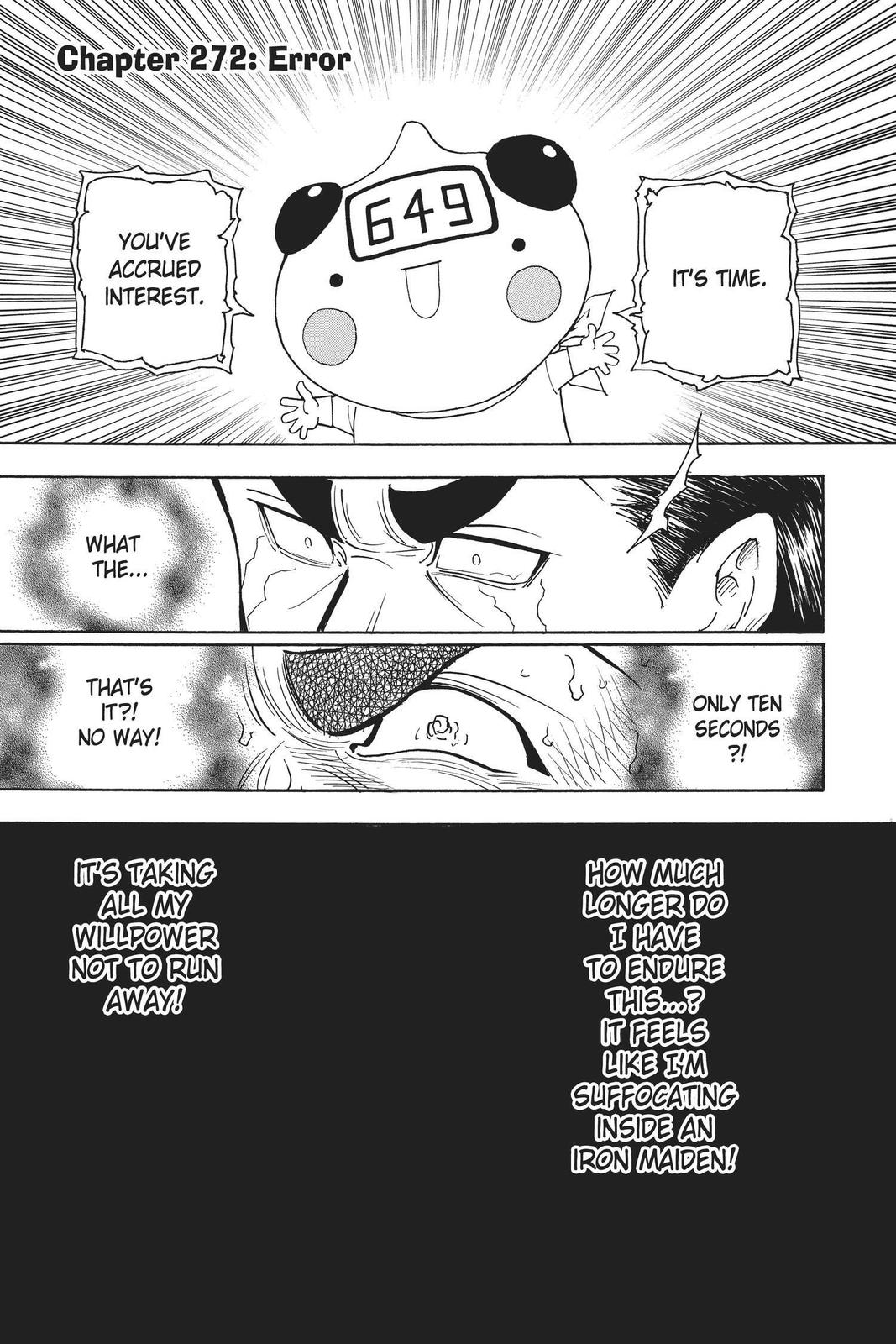

SOMETHING WAS OFF...
THAT WAS TOO QUICK!!
TWO SOLDIER ANTS SAW AN ENEMY, SENT OUT A WARNING, THEN IMMEDIATELY DIED...
THE INTRUDER WHO KILLED THEM TURNED BACK. THE TIME BETWEEN THAT AND FLUTTER COMING DOWN THE HALL...
...WAS TOO SHORT!!
FLUTTER AND THE INTRUDER...
...MUST'VE PASSED EACH OTHER.
THEN WHY WERE THE TWO PEONS KILLED...
...YET FLUTTER WAS SPARED?
FLUTTER IS ON THEIR SIDE...
HE'S A TRAITOR?!

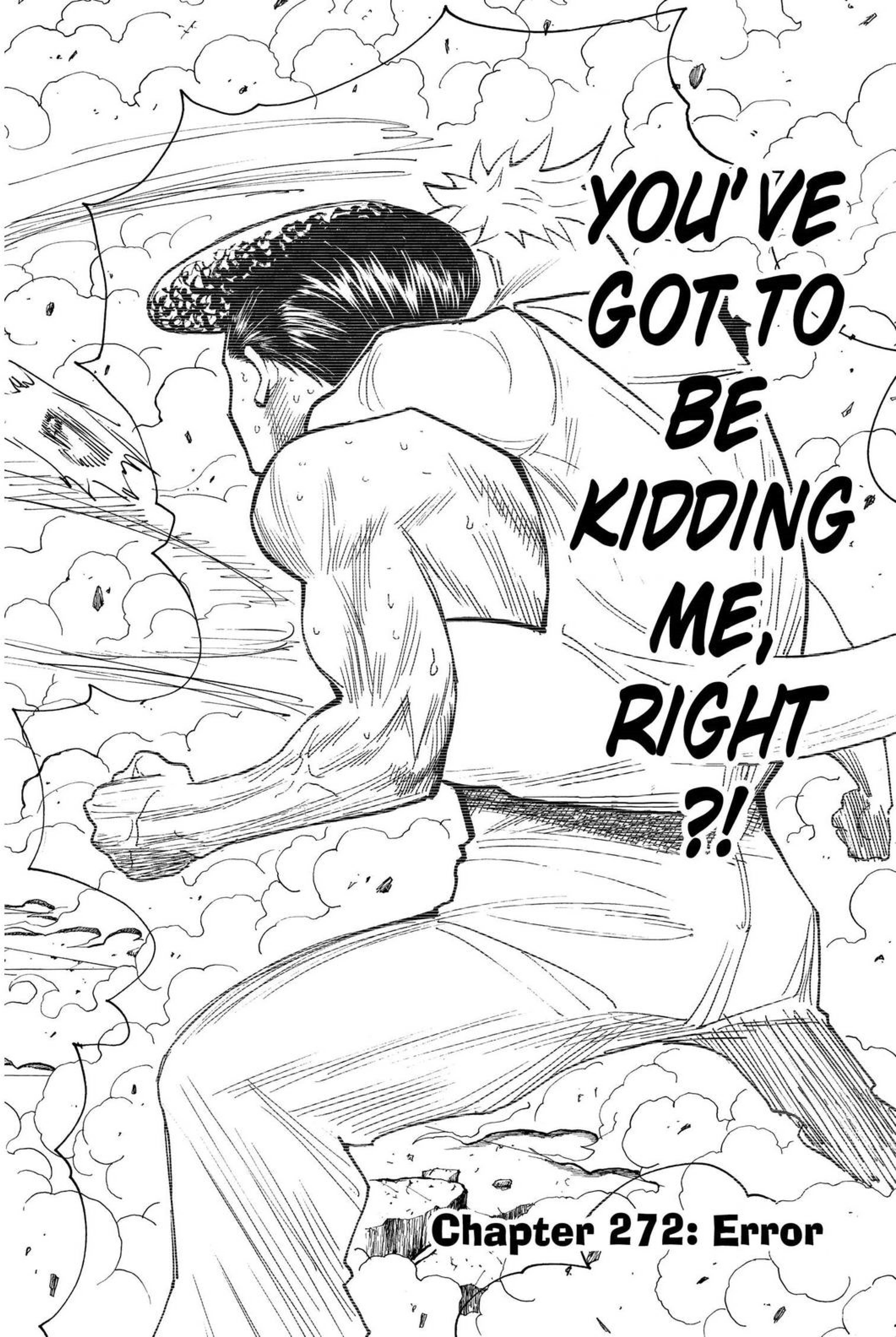

HUH? FLUTTER? WHAT'S GOING ON?!
KRIIRRMMM DM
SIR PITOU'S EN IS GONE AGAIN.
THOOOM
R,,, RRRMMM
0:00:18:68
IS HE ACTING ALONE?
OR DID HAGYA SEND HIM?!
I JUST GOT BACK MYSELF...
SEEMS TO BE AN ENEMY ATTACK.
FOR REAL?!
I CAN'T IMAGINE ANYTHING ELSE.
HEY, YOUR WINGS?
OH YES.
THEY GOT ME JUST NOW.


YOU GOING DOWN?
UM.
YES.
SIR HAGYA'S ORDERS, YOU SEE...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
HM?
WELL... IT'S NOT LIKE WE WERE TOLD TO DEFEND THE PALACE.
YEAH, BUT...I WANT TO TRY OUT...
...MY NEW ABILITY.
DDOOOMM
WHOA!
A BIG ONE...
...
MM...
RRM...


WOW, SOUNDS FUN!!
MM
R R
TIME TO JOIN IN!!
DM
BE CAREFUL!
I'M GONNA TAKE A LOOK AROUND.
RRMM
I'LL BE OFF THEN.
SURE.
...
"SIR HAGYA" ...?

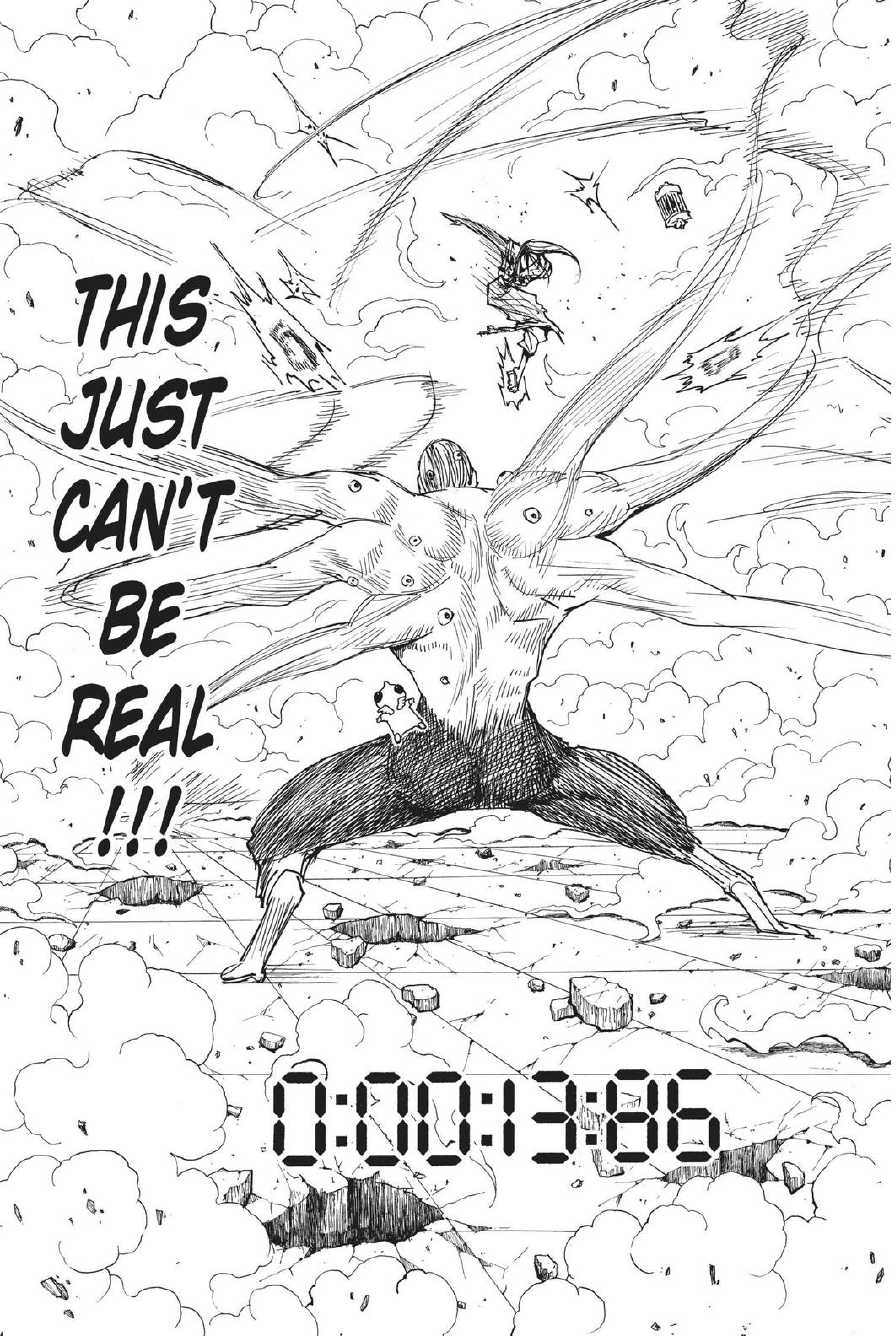
Chapter 272: Error


649
IT'S TIME.
YOU'VE ACCRUED INTEREST.
WHAT THE...
ONLY TEN SECONDS ?!
THAT'S IT?! NO WAY!
HOW MUCH LONGER DO I HAVE TO ENDURE THIS...? IT FEELS LIKE I'M SUFFOCATING INSIDE AN IRON MAIDEN!
IT'S TAKING ALL MY WILLPOWER NOT TO RUN AWAY!

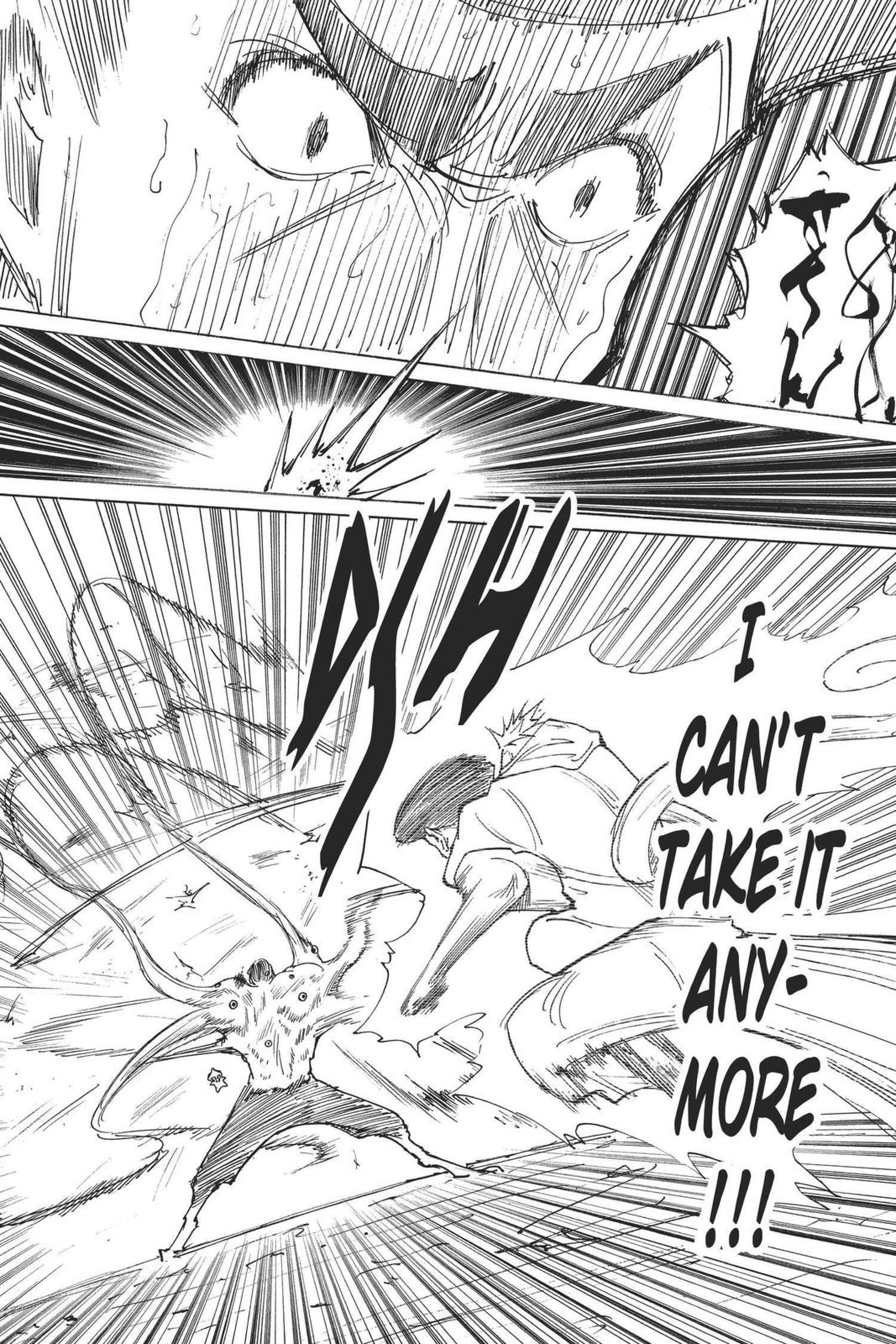


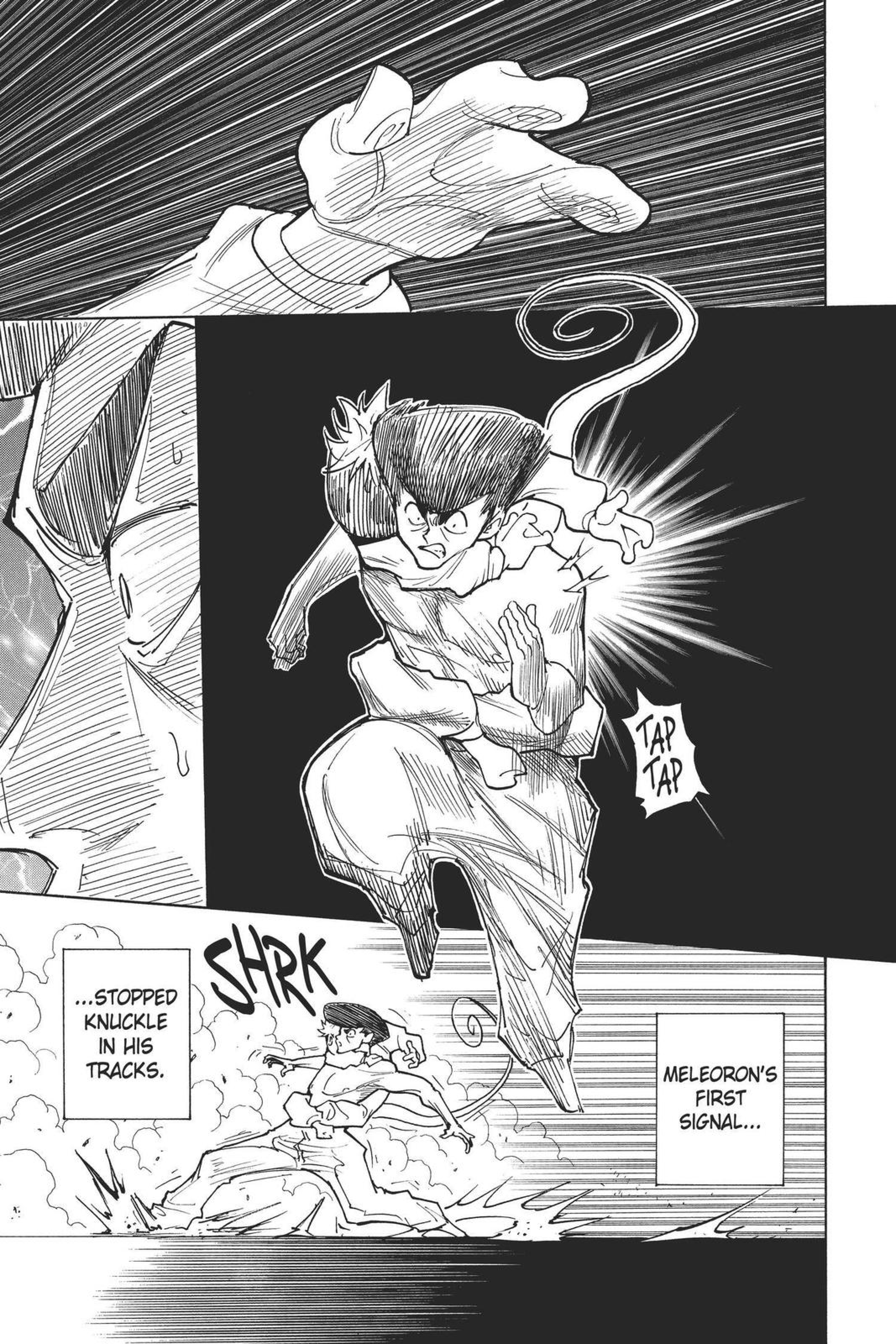
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME, RIGHT?!

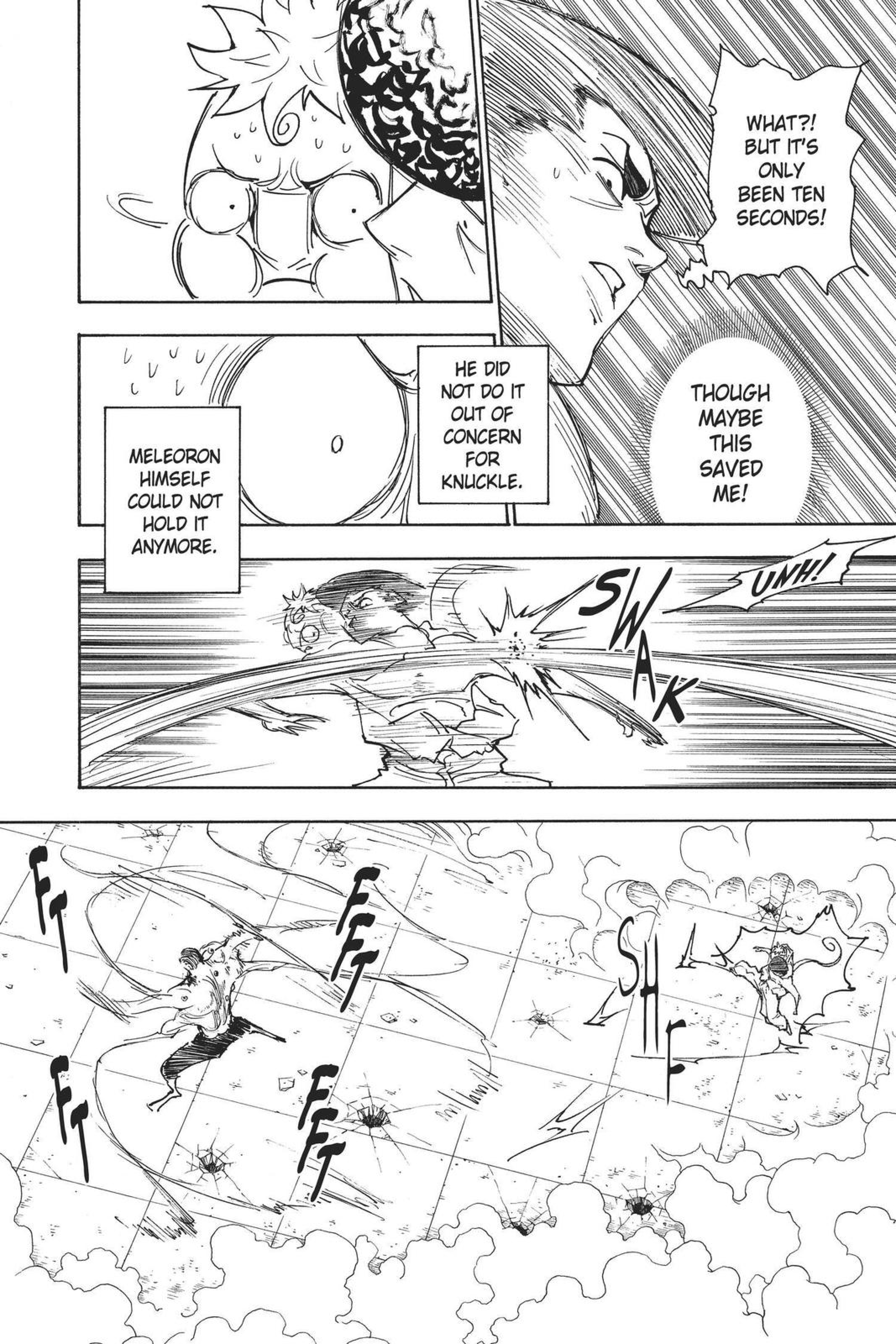
Chapter 272: Error

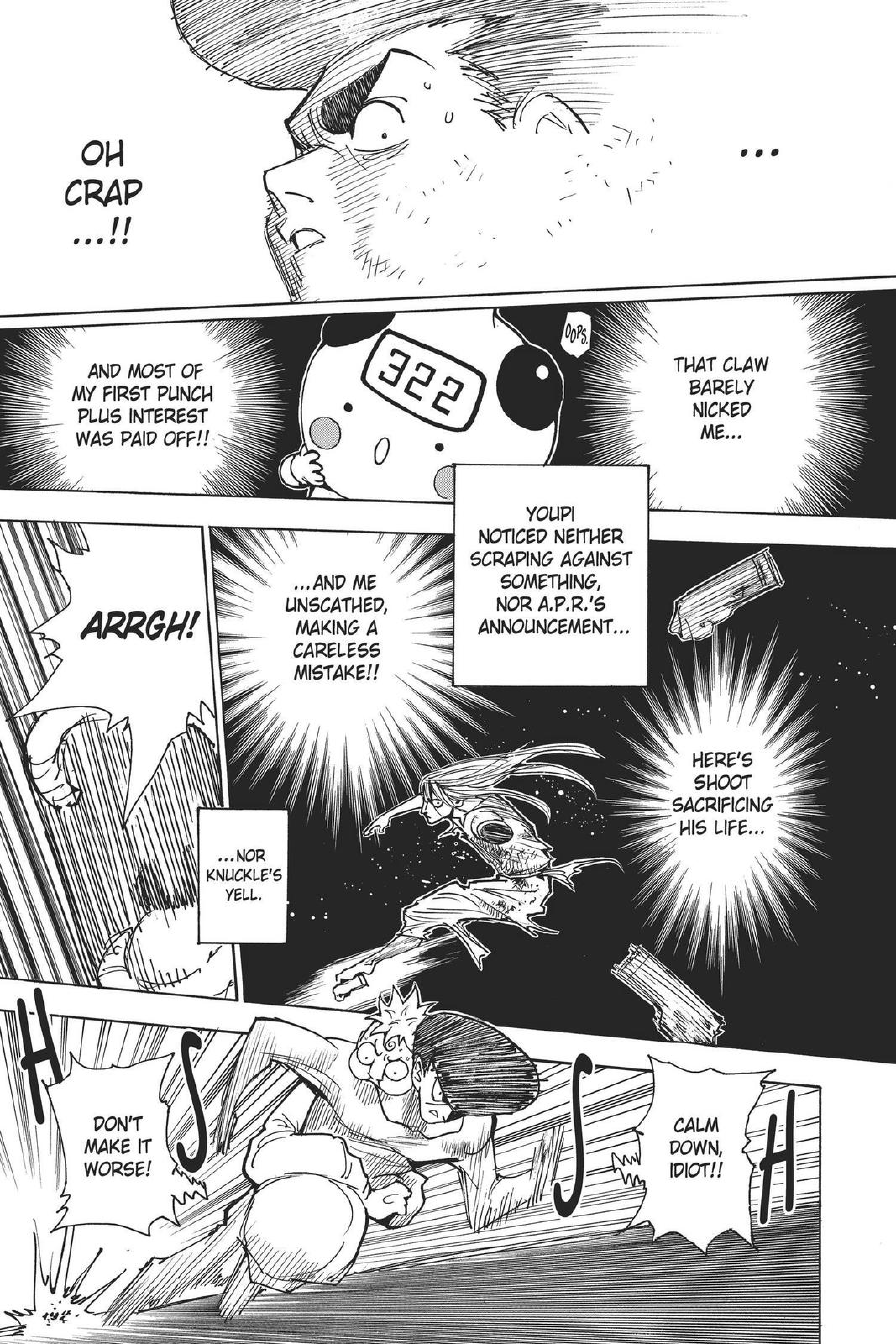


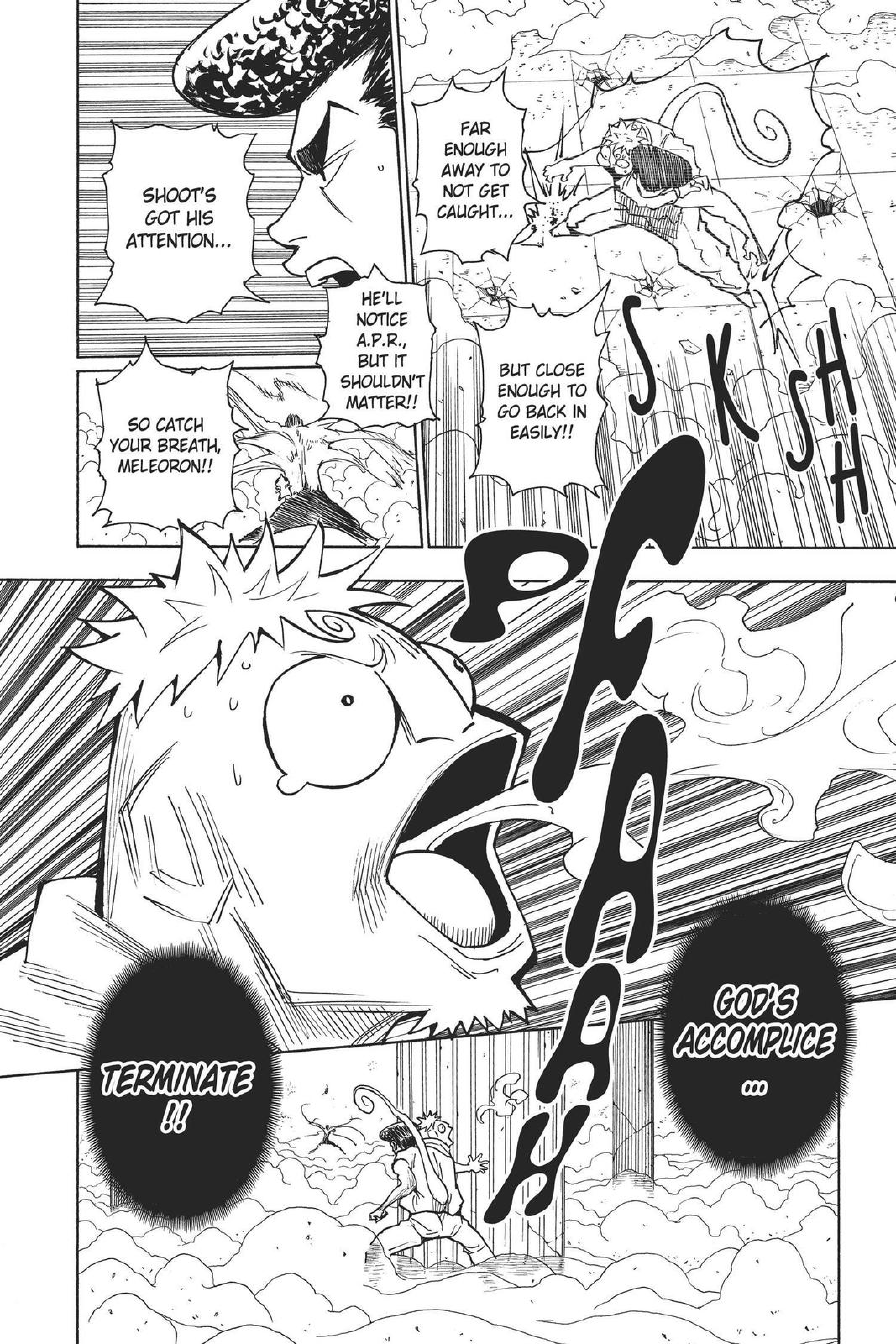
THIS JUST CAN'T BE REAL!!!
0:00:13:86

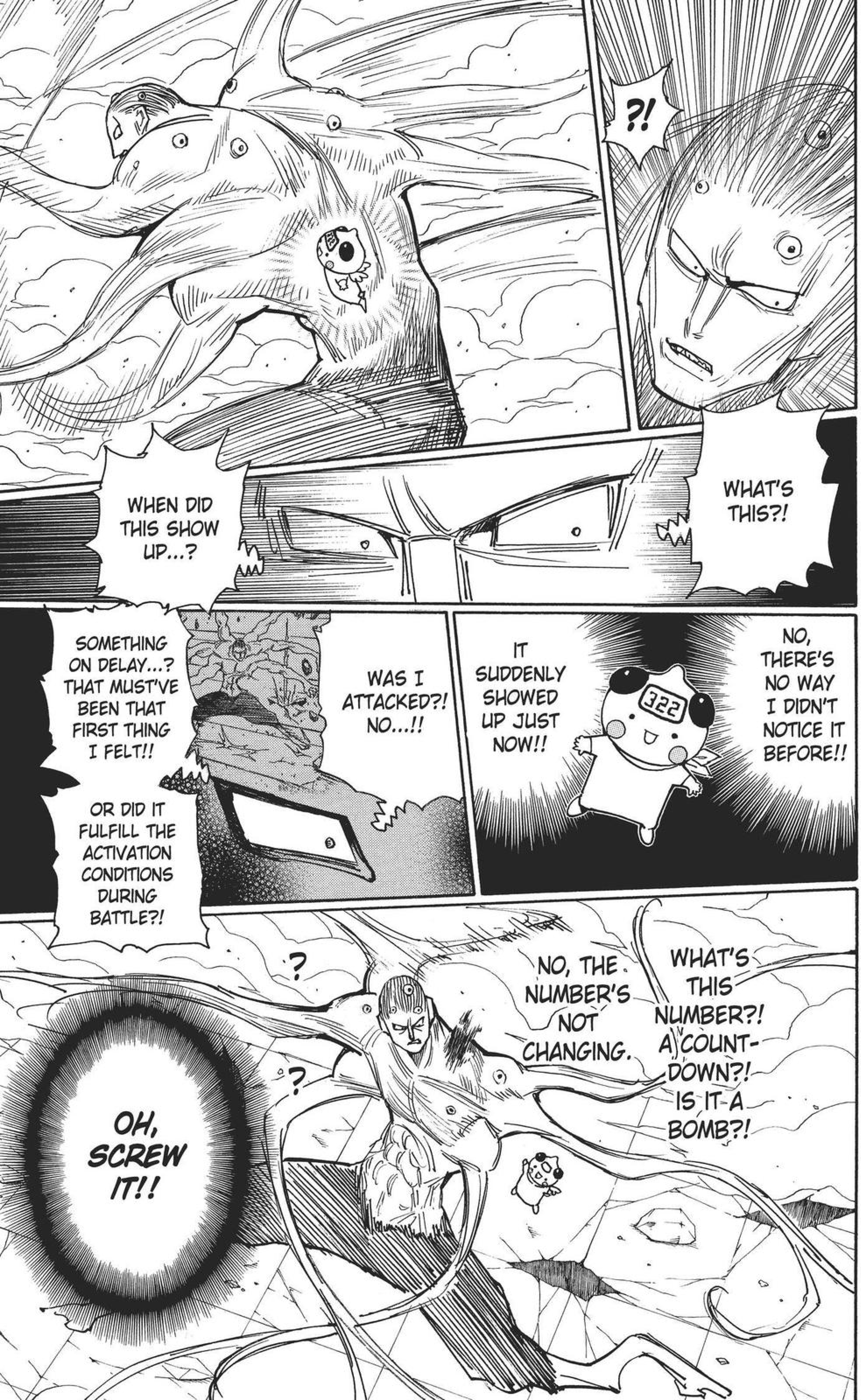

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY-MORE!!!
DSH

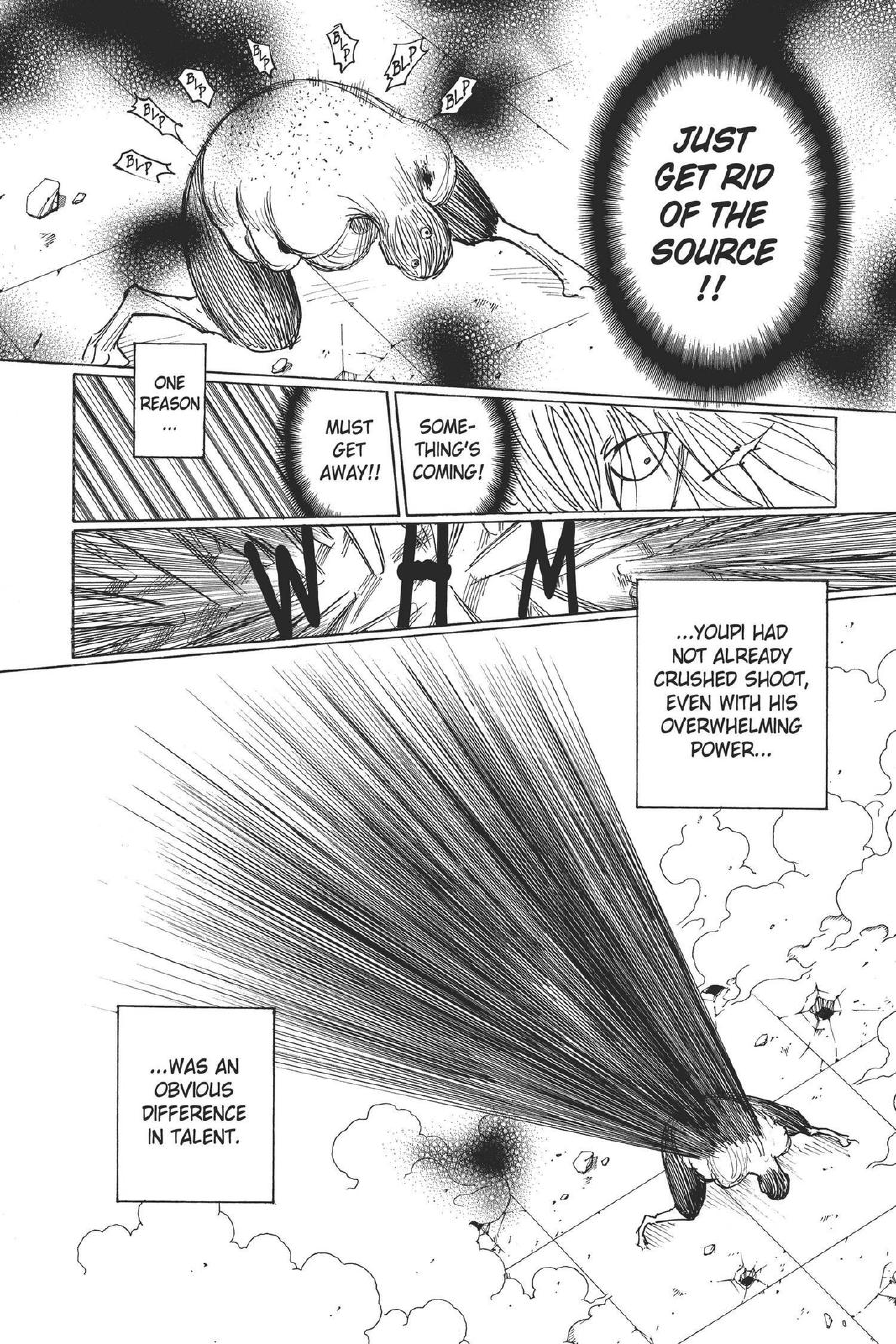

TAP TAP
MELEORON'S FIRST SIGNAL...
SHRK
...STOPPED KNUCKLE IN HIS TRACKS.

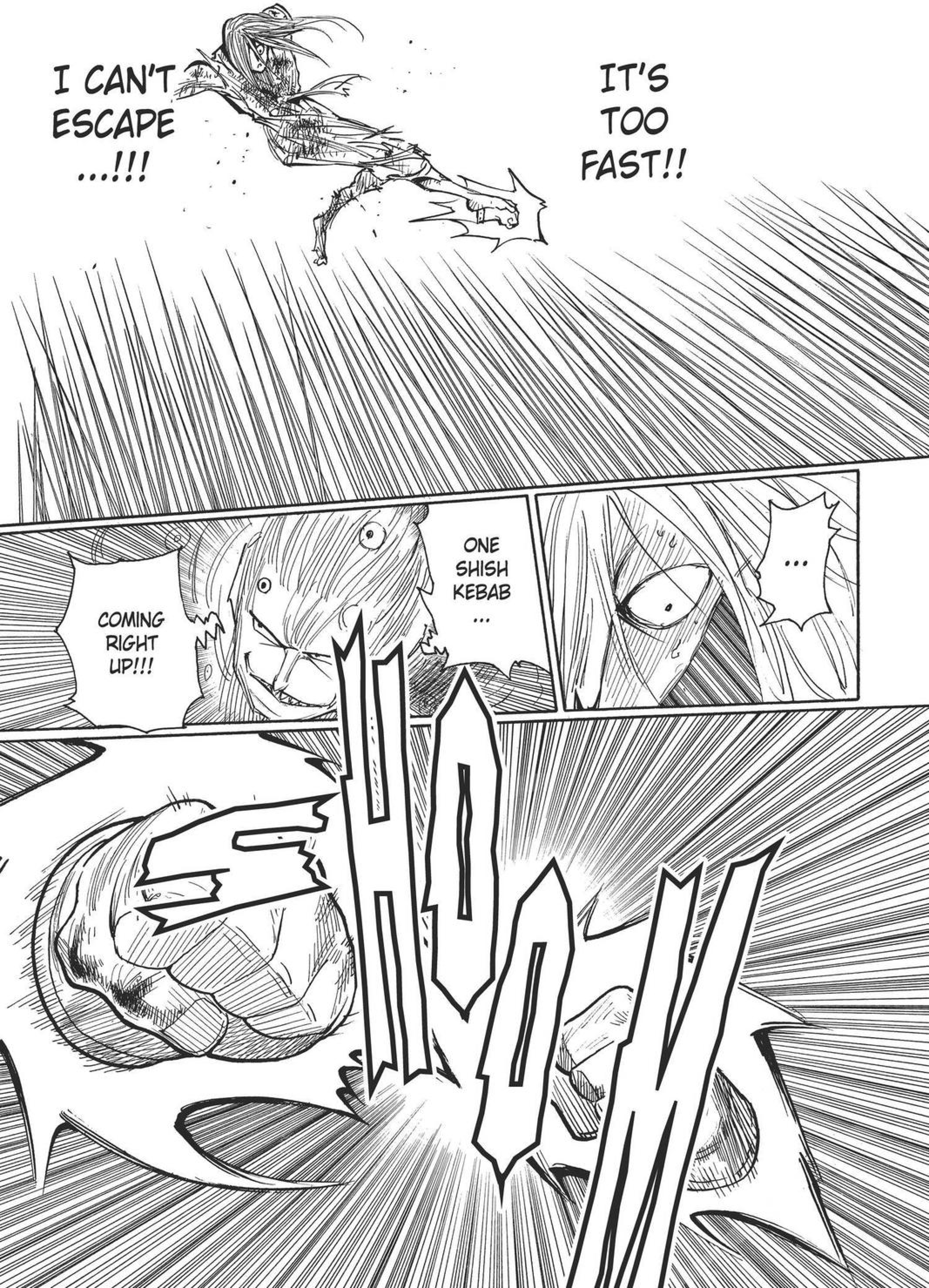

WHAT?! BUT IT'S ONLY BEEN TEN SECONDS!
THOUGH MAYBE THIS SAVED ME!
HE DID NOT DO IT OUT OF CONCERN FOR KNUCKLE.
MELEORON HIMSELF COULD NOT HOLD IT ANYMORE.
UNH!
SWAK
SHF
FFT
FFT
FFT
FFT

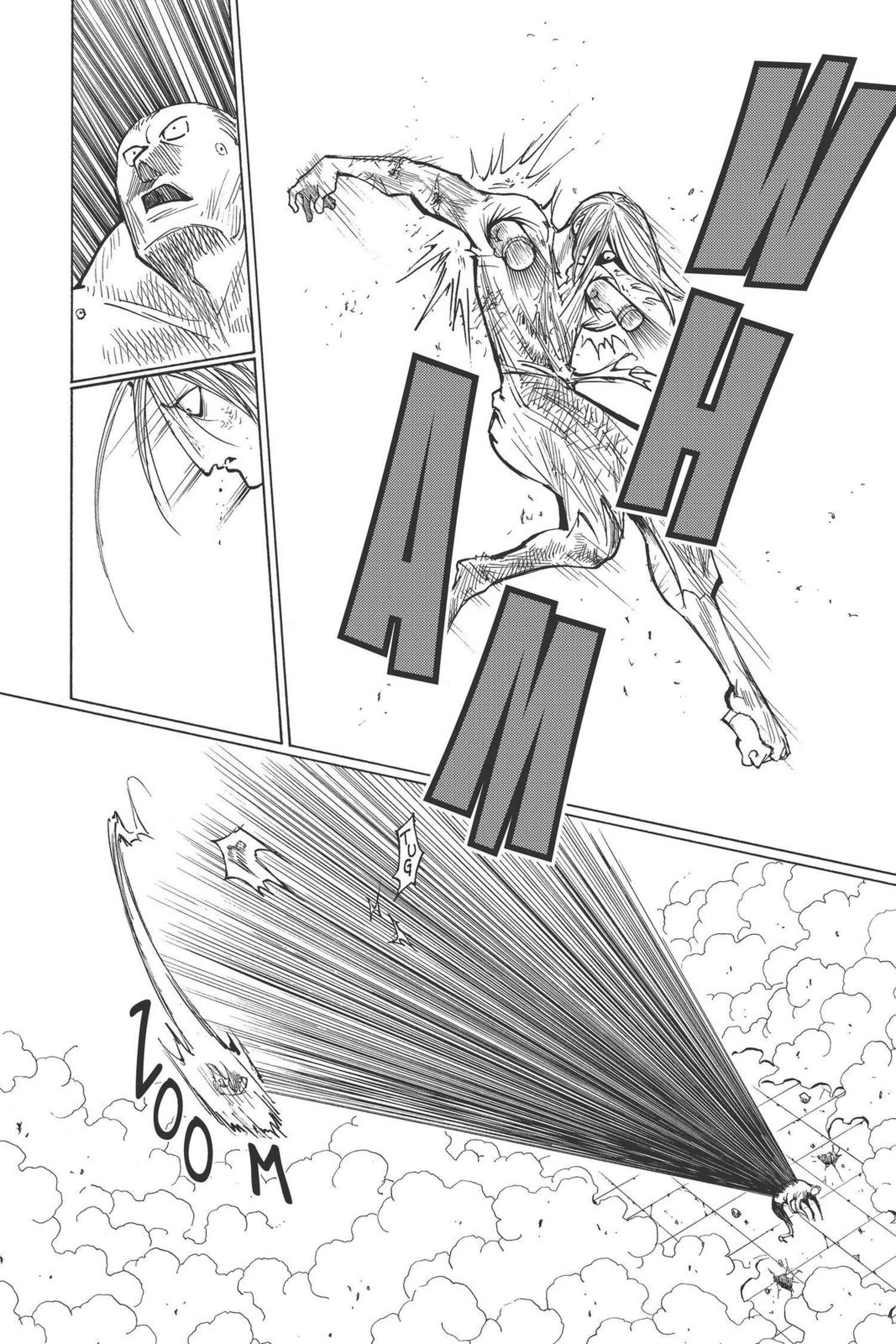

...
OH CRAP ...!!
THAT CLAW BARELY NICKED ME...
OOPS.
322
AND MOST OF MY FIRST PUNCH PLUS INTEREST WAS PAID OFF!!
YOUPI NOTICED NEITHER SCRAPING AGAINST SOMETHING, NOR A.P.R.'S ANNOUNCEMENT...
HERE'S SHOOT SACRIFICING HIS LIFE...
...AND ME UNSCATHED, MAKING A CARELESS MISTAKE!!
ARRGH!
...NOR KNUCKLE'S YELL.
H
S
CALM DOWN, IDIOT!!
DON'T MAKE IT WORSE!
S
H

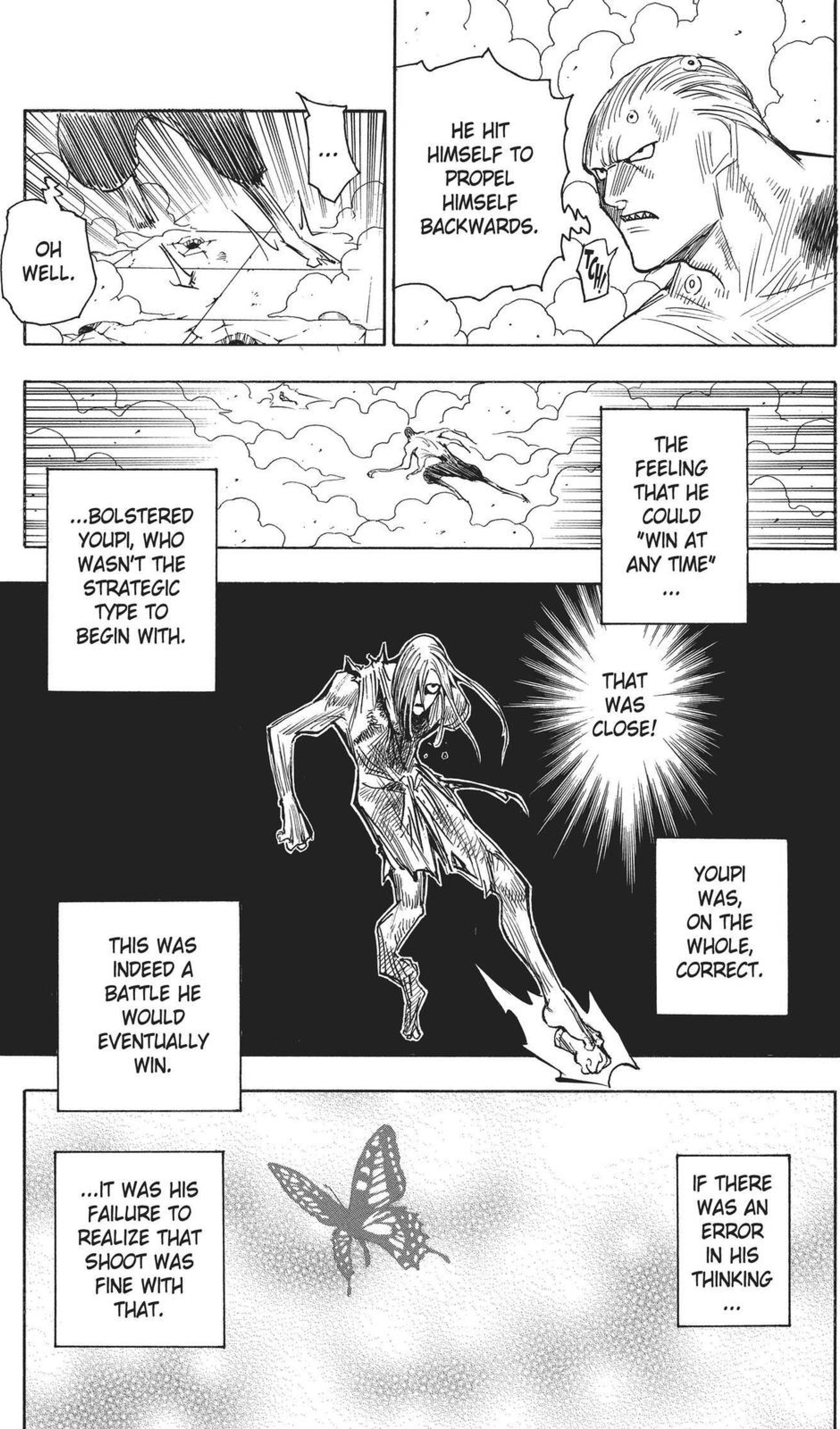

FAR ENOUGH AWAY TO NOT GET CAUGHT…
BUT CLOSE ENOUGH TO GO BACK IN EASILY!!
SKSHH
SHOOT'S GOT HIS ATTENTION…
HE'LL NOTICE A.P.R., BUT IT SHOULDN'T MATTER!!
SO CATCH YOUR BREATH, MELEORON!!
PFHAAAHH
GOD'S ACCOMPLICE …
TERMINATE !!

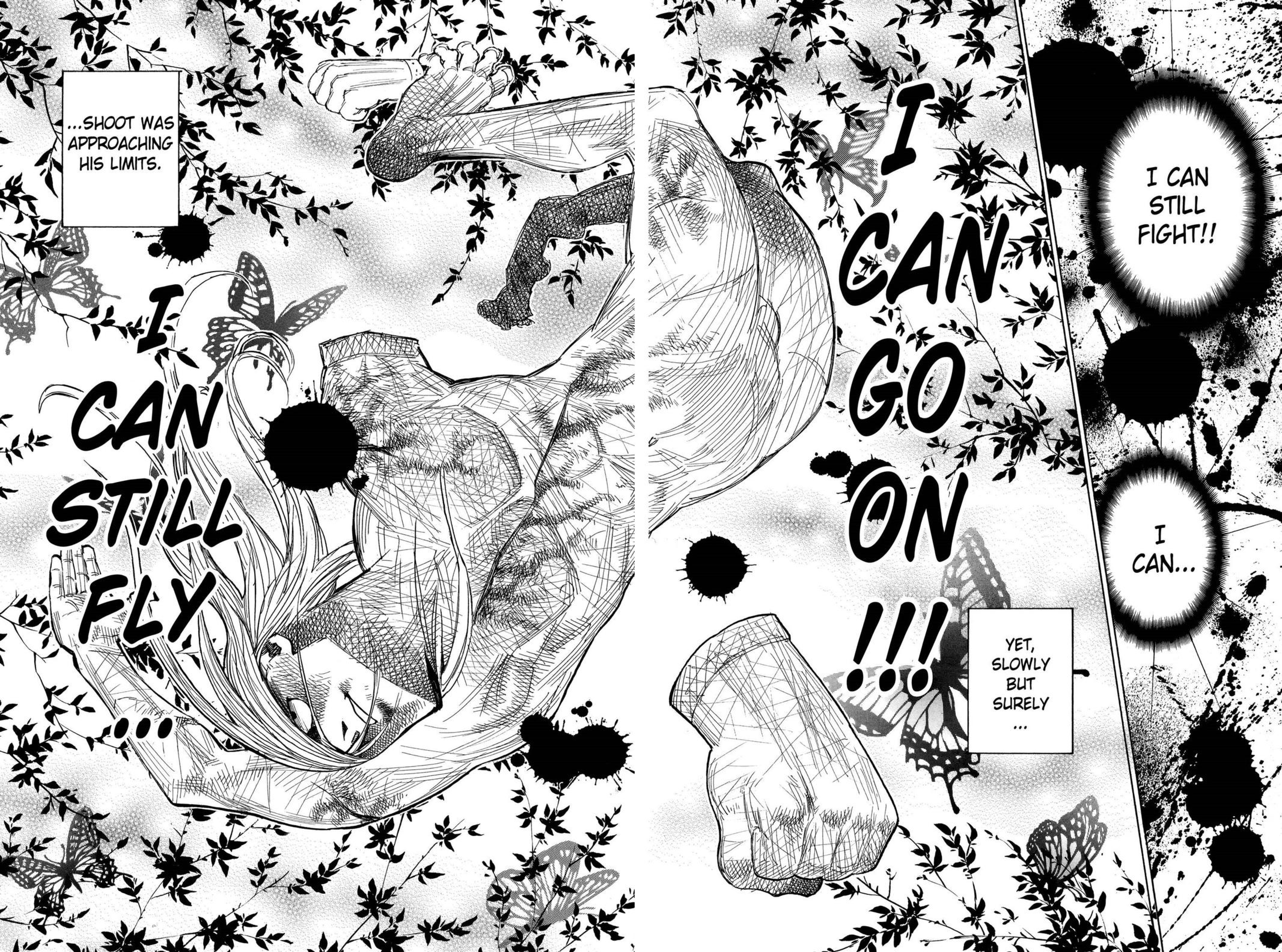

?!
WHAT'S THIS?!
WHEN DID THIS SHOW UP...?
NO, THERE'S NO WAY I DIDN'T NOTICE IT BEFORE!!
322
IT SUDDENLY SHOWED UP JUST NOW!!
WAS I ATTACKED?! NO...!!
SOMETHING ON DELAY...? THAT MUST'VE BEEN THAT FIRST THING I FELT!!
OR DID IT FULFILL THE ACTIVATION CONDITIONS DURING BATTLE?!
WHAT'S THIS NUMBER?! A COUNTDOWN?! IS IT A BOMB?!
NO, THE NUMBER'S NOT CHANGING.
?
?
OH, SCREW IT!!

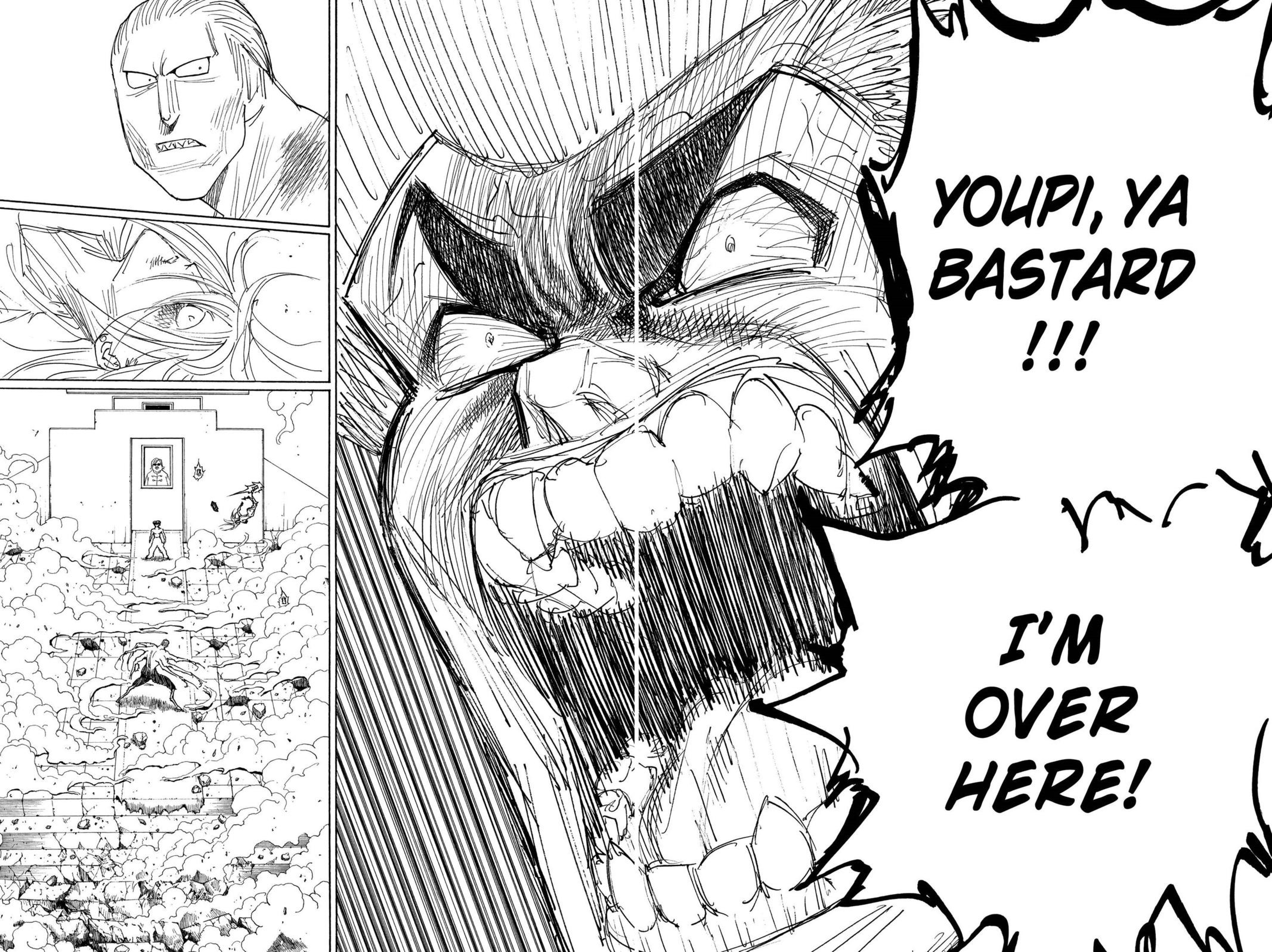

BLP
BLP
BLP
BLP
BLP
BLP
BLP
JUST GET RID OF THE SOURCE !!
SOME-THING'S COMING!
MUST GET AWAY!!
ONE REASON ...
WHM
...YOUPI HAD NOT ALREADY CRUSHED SHOOT, EVEN WITH HIS OVERWHELMING POWER...
...WAS AN OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE IN TALENT.

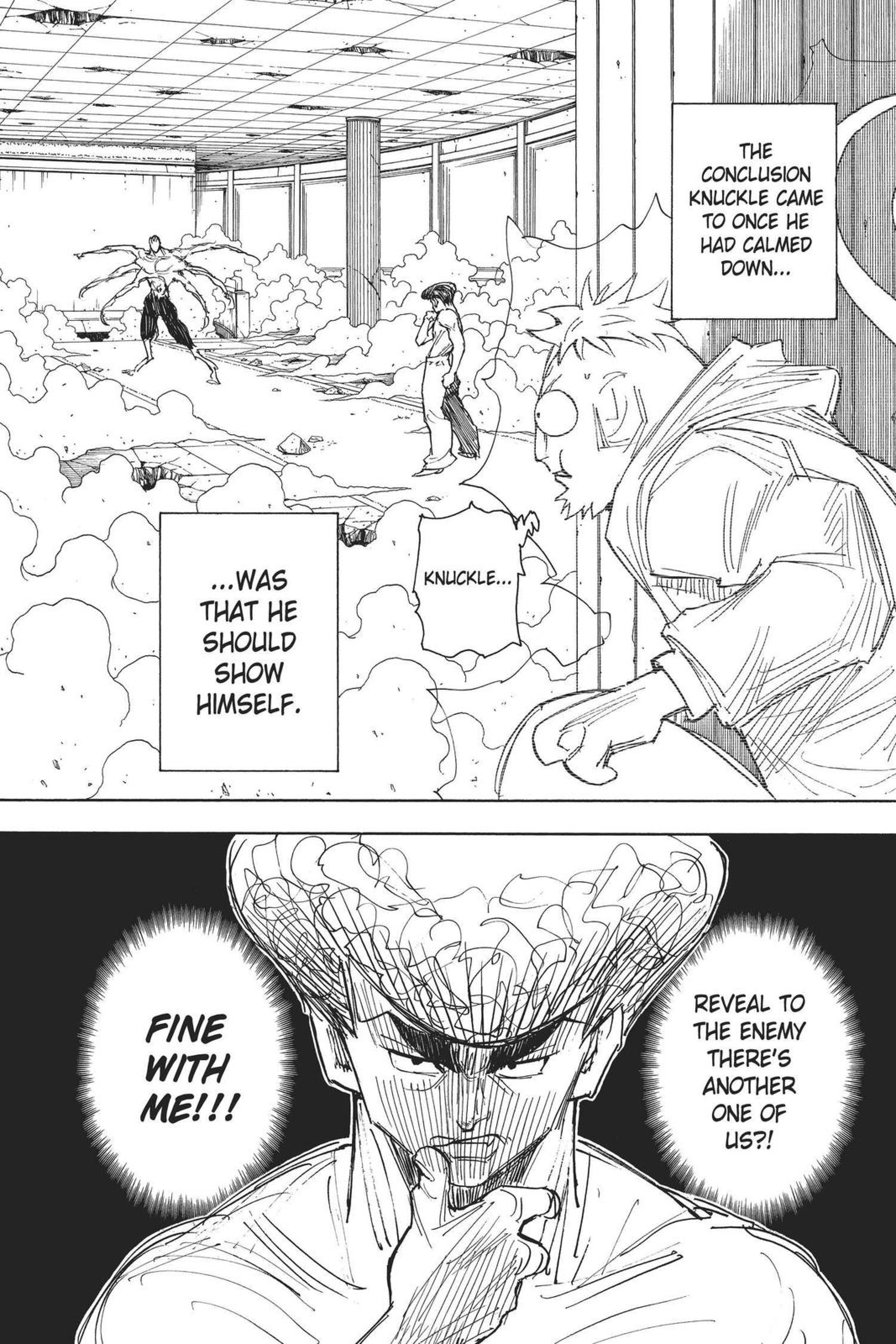

IT'S TOO FAST!!
I CAN'T ESCAPE ...!!!
...
ONE SHISH KEBAB ...
COMING RIGHT UP!!!
SHOOM

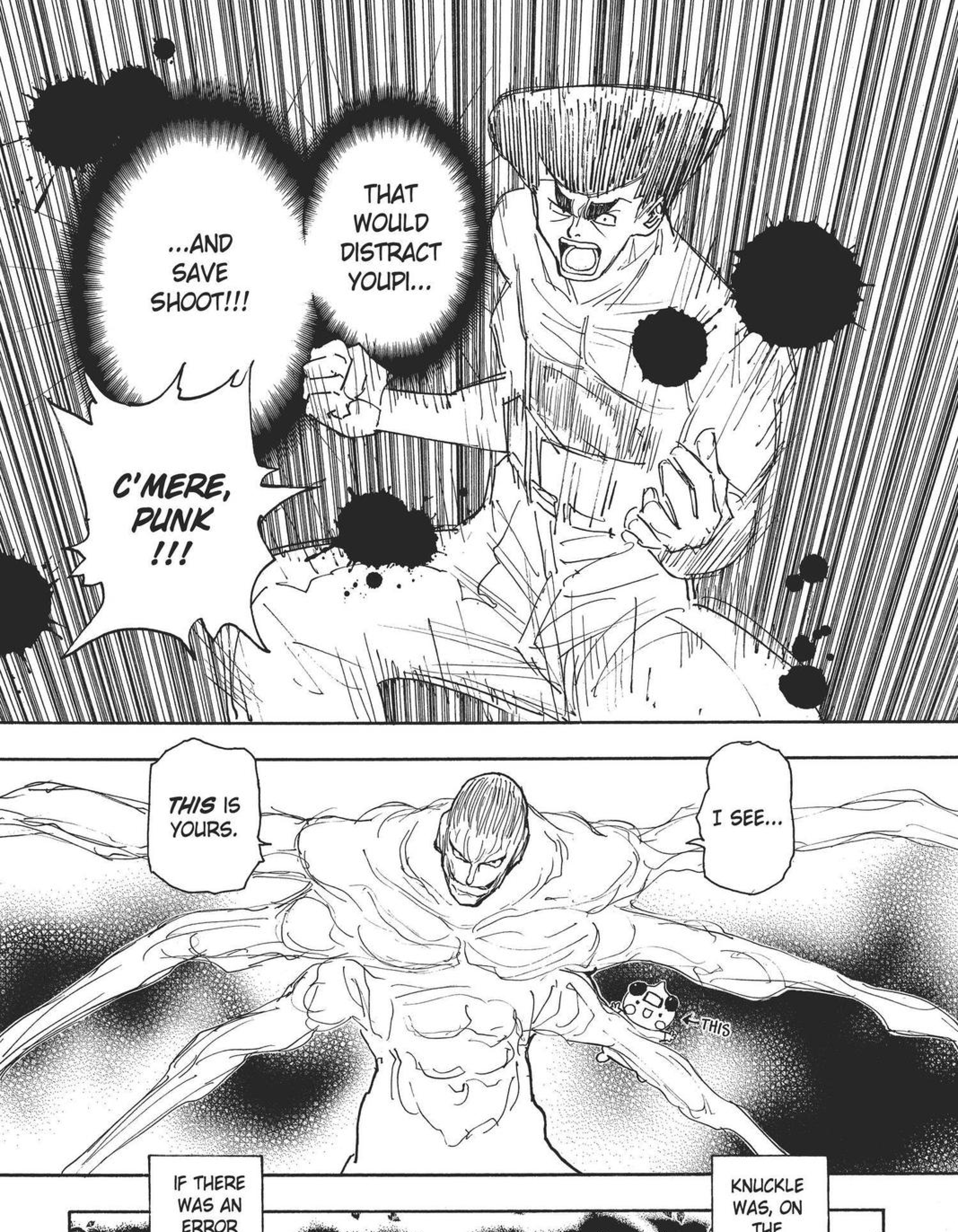

WHAM
TUG
ZOOM


HE HIT HIMSELF TO PROPEL HIMSELF BACKWARDS.
TCH!
...
OH WELL.
THE FEELING THAT HE COULD "WIN AT ANY TIME" ...
...BOLSTERED YOUPI, WHO WASN'T THE STRATEGIC TYPE TO BEGIN WITH.
THAT WAS CLOSE!
YOUPI WAS, ON THE WHOLE, CORRECT.
THIS WAS INDEED A BATTLE HE WOULD EVENTUALLY WIN.
IF THERE WAS AN ERROR IN HIS THINKING ...
...IT WAS HIS FAILURE TO REALIZE THAT SHOOT WAS FINE WITH THAT.

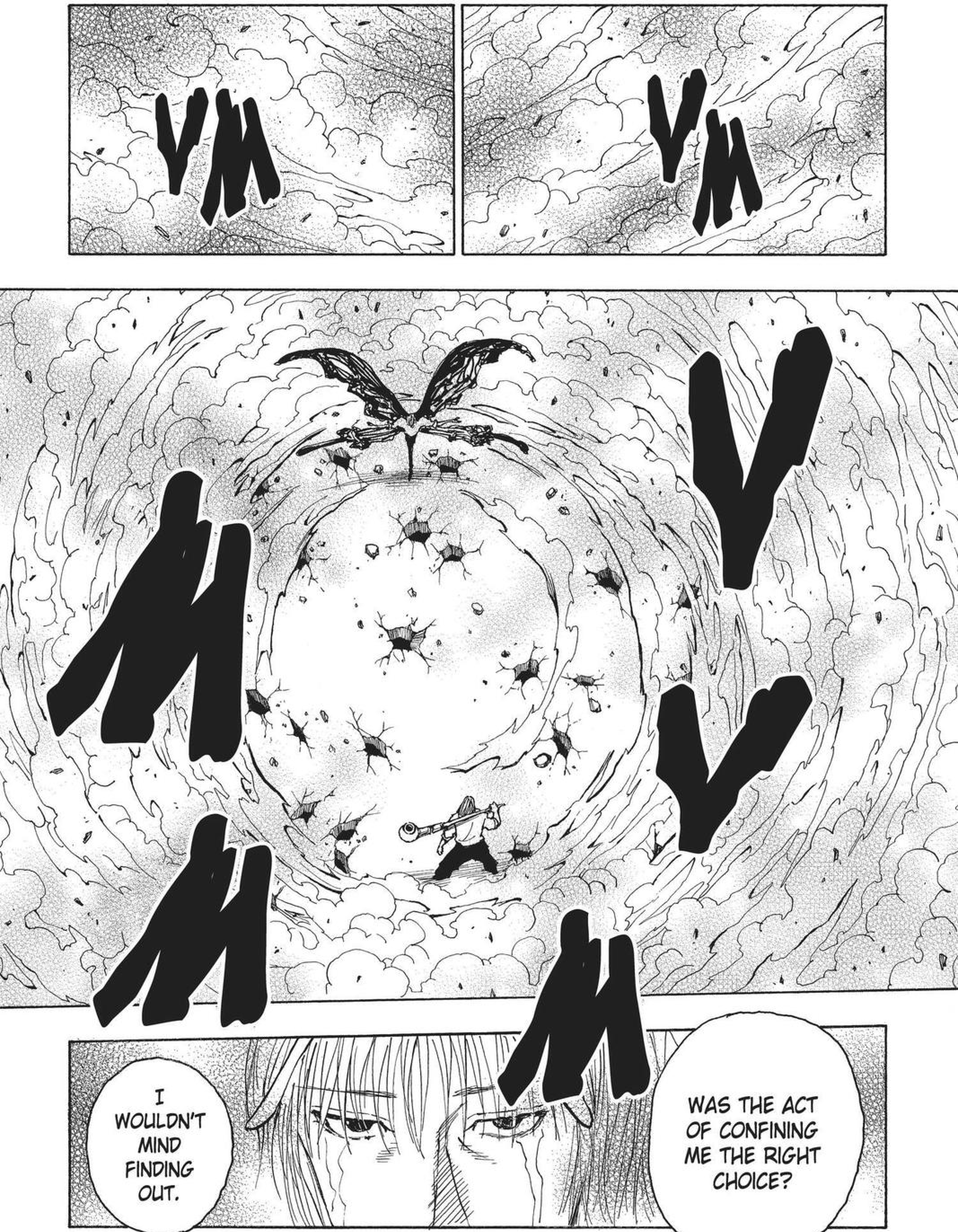

I CAN STILL FIGHT!!
I CAN...
I CAN GO ON!!!
YET, SLOWLY BUT SURELY...
...SHOOT WAS APPROACHING HIS LIMITS.
I CAN STILL FLY...

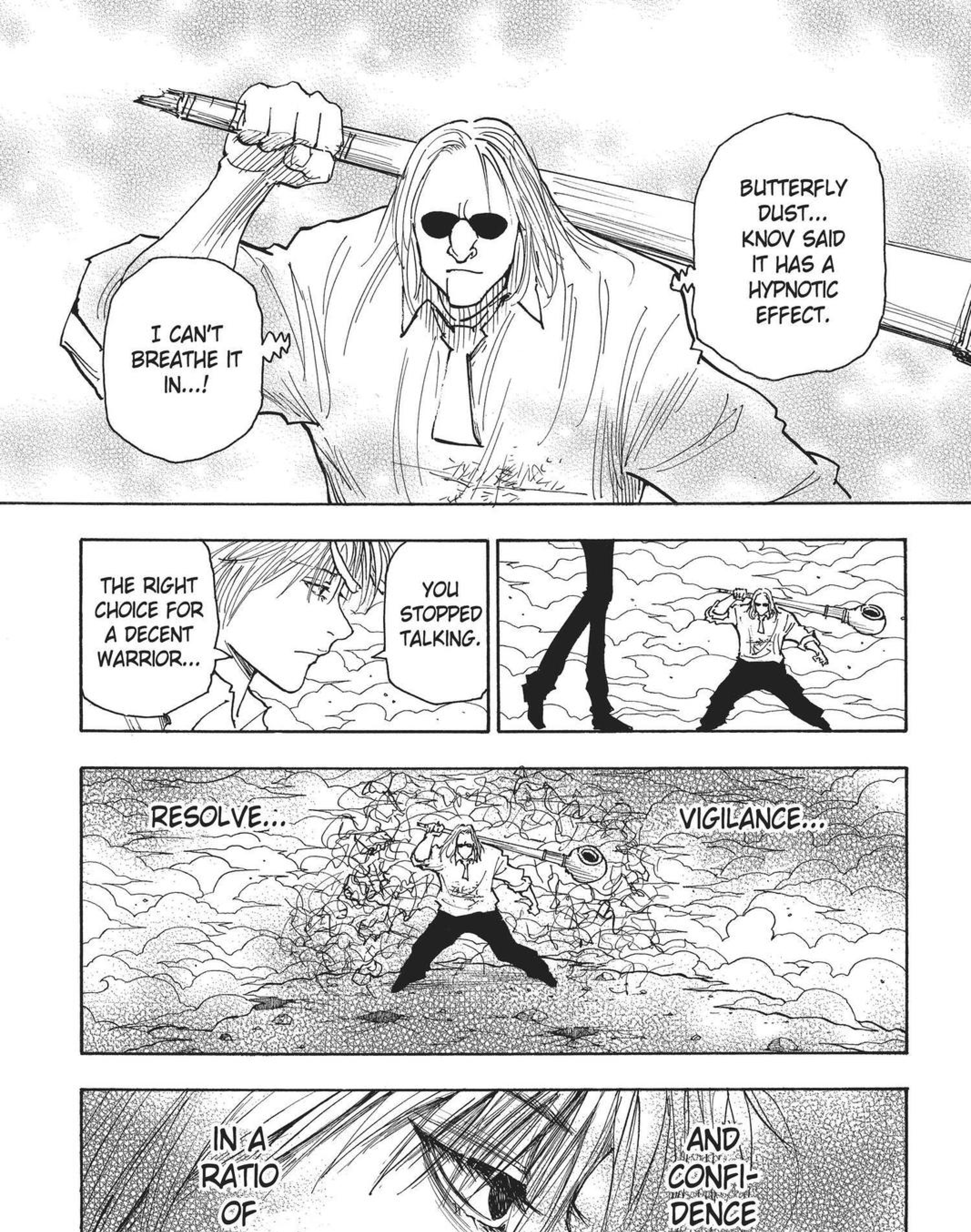

YOUPI, YA BASTARD !!!
I'M OVER HERE!

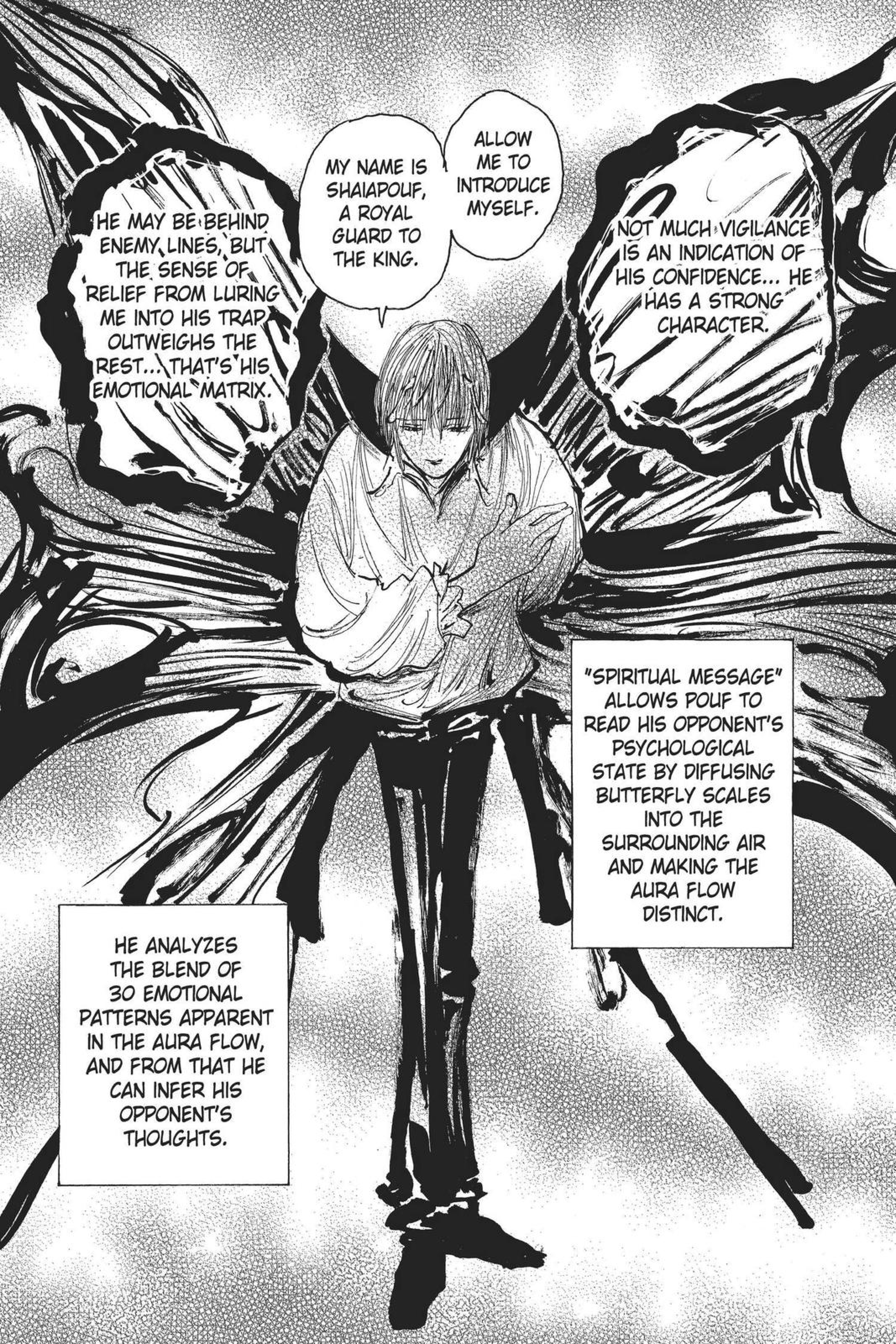

THE CONCLUSION KNUCKLE CAME TO ONCE HE HAD CALMED DOWN...
KNUCKLE...
...WAS THAT HE SHOULD SHOW HIMSELF.
REVEAL TO THE ENEMY THERE'S ANOTHER ONE OF US?!
FINE WITH ME!!!

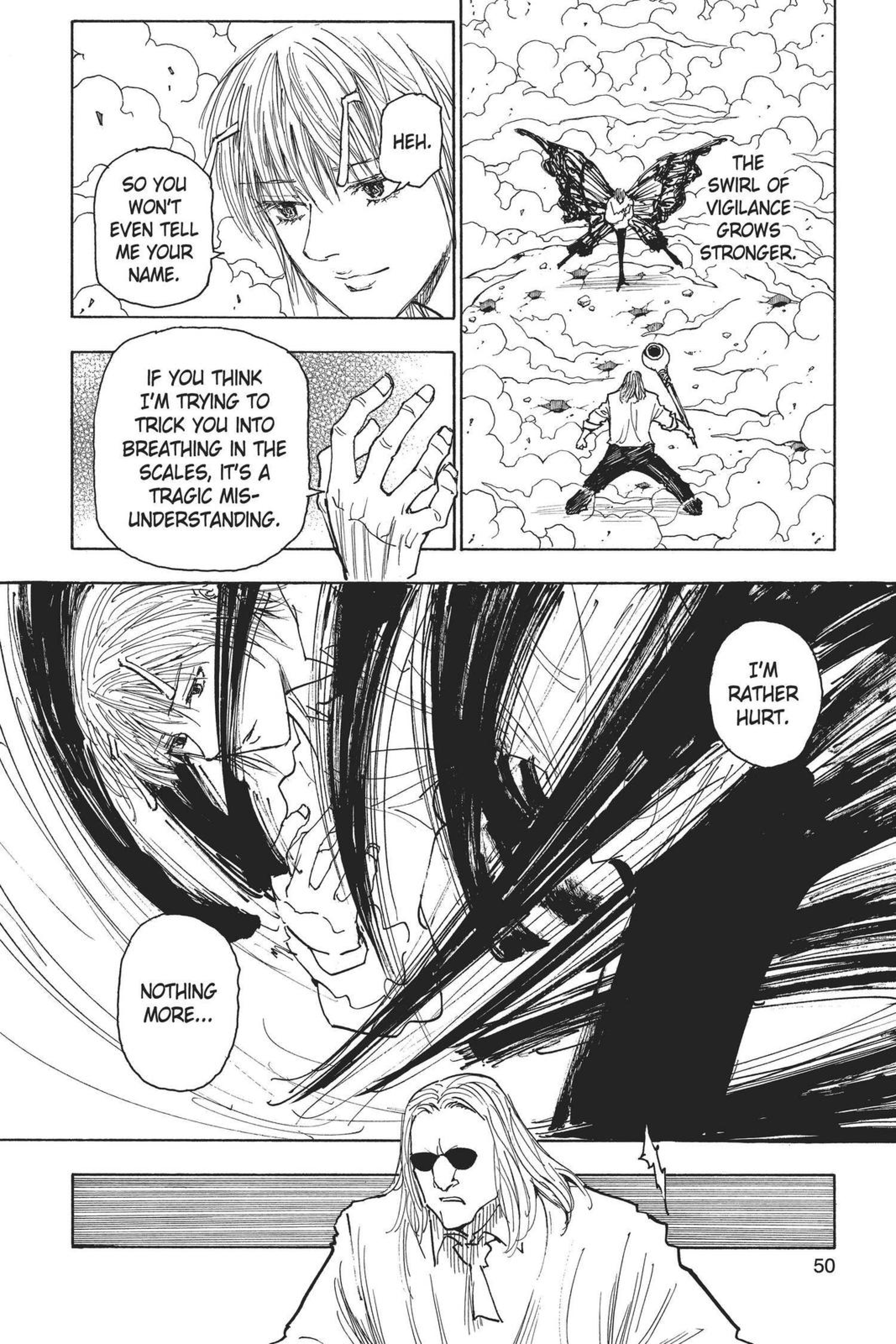

THAT WOULD DISTRACT YOUPI...
...AND SAVE SHOOT!!!
C'MERE, PUNK!!!
I SEE...
THIS IS YOURS.
←THIS
KNUCKLE WAS, ON THE WHOLE, CORRECT.
IF THERE WAS AN ERROR IN HIS THINKING...

Chapter 273: We Meet Again

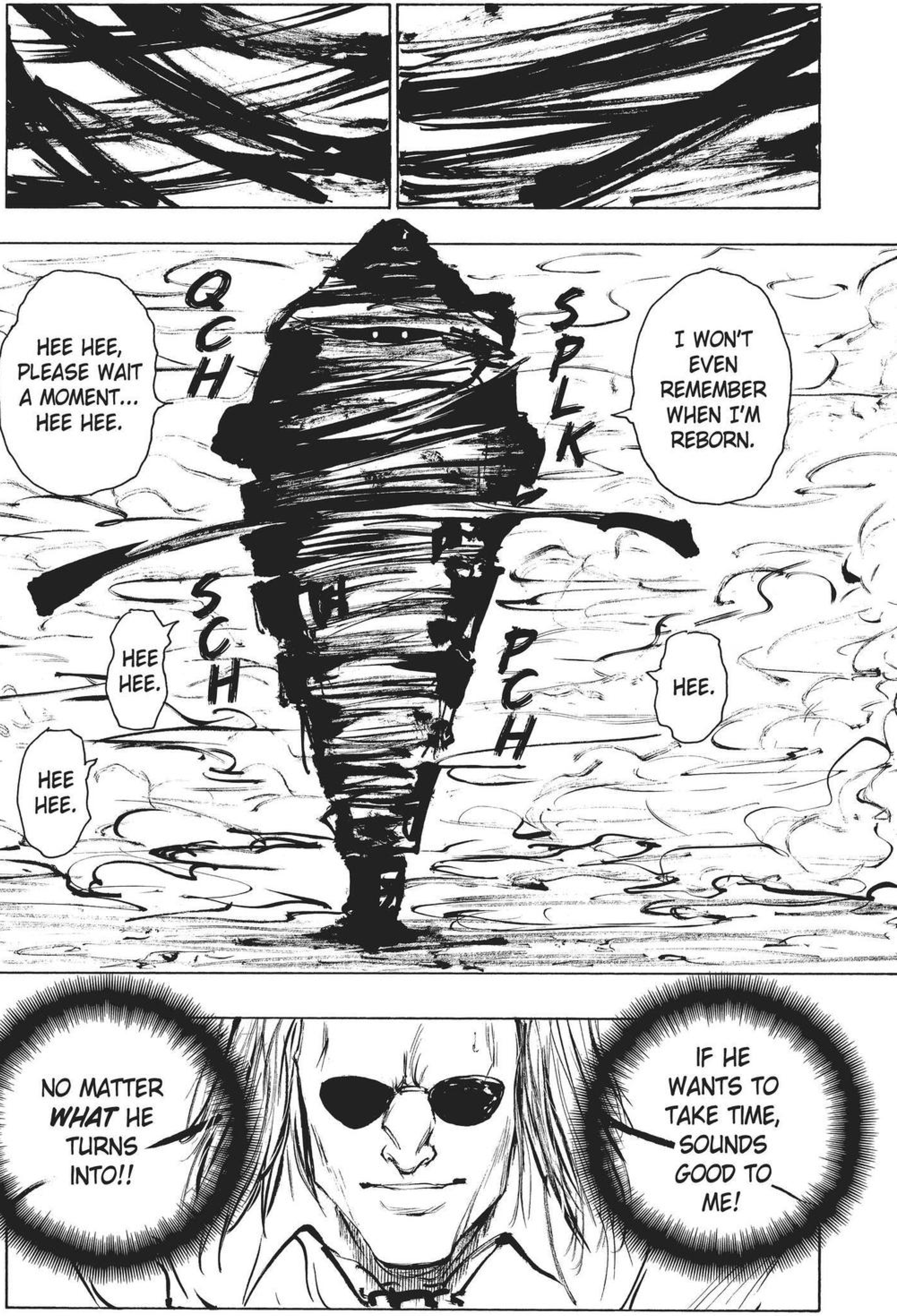

VM
VM
VVVMMM
WAS THE ACT OF CONFINING ME THE RIGHT CHOICE?
I WOULDN'T MIND FINDING OUT.

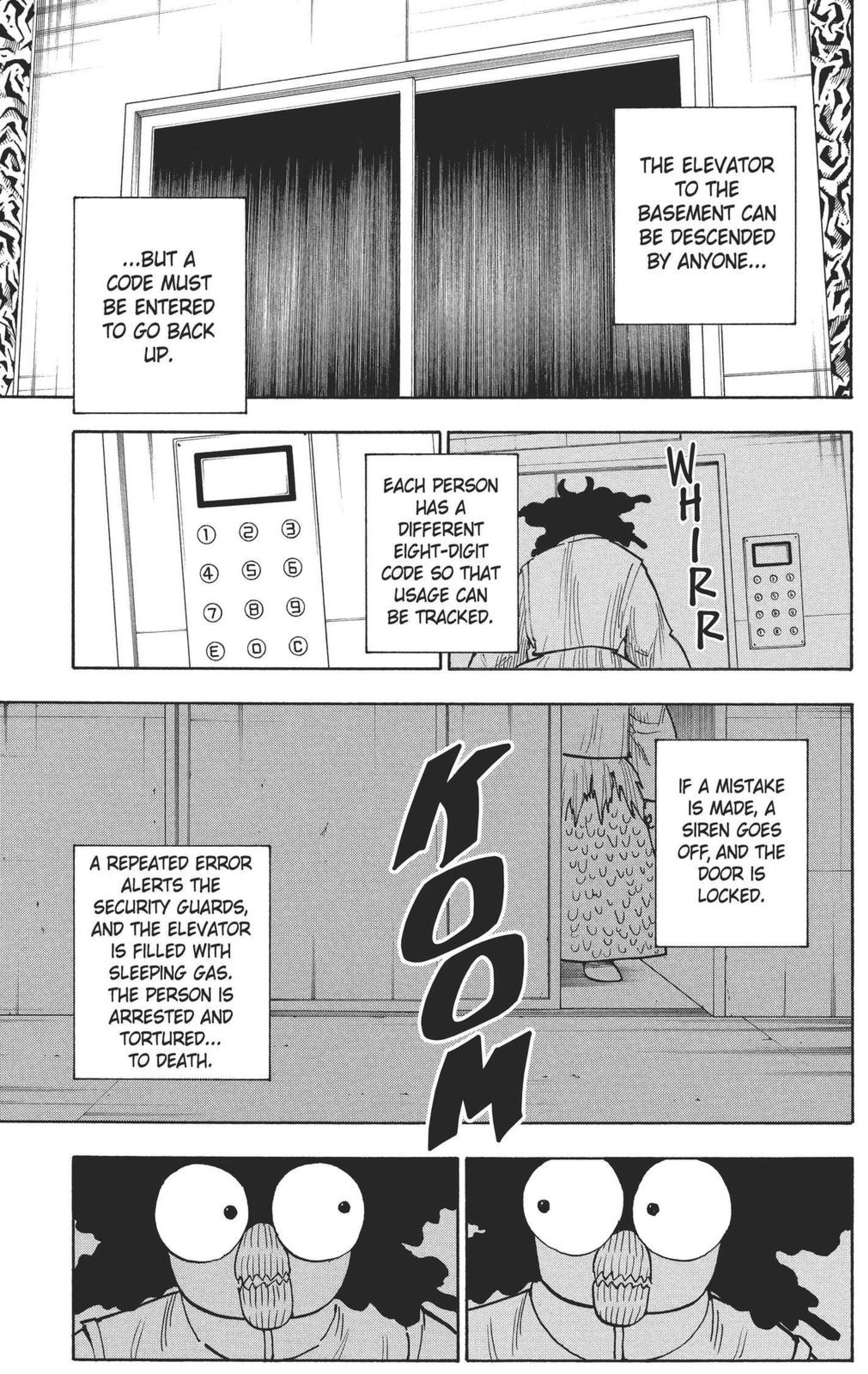

BUTTERFLY DUST... KNOV SAID IT HAS A HYPNOTIC EFFECT.
I CAN'T BREATHE IT IN...!
YOU STOPPED TALKING.
THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR A DECENT WARRIOR...
RESOLVE...
VIGILANCE...
AND CONFIDENCE...
IN A RATIO OF 2:3:5.

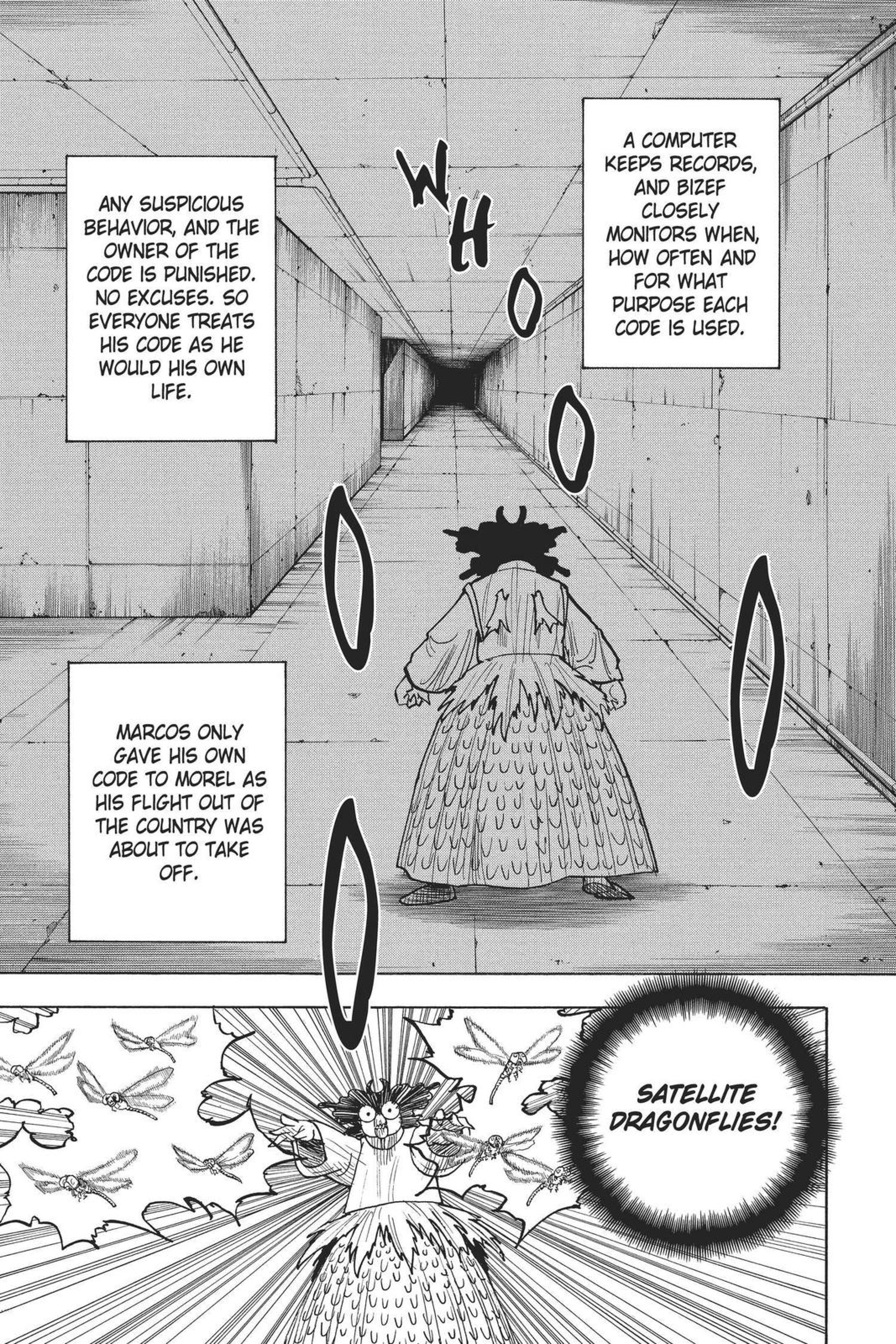

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF.
MY NAME IS SHAIAPOUF, A ROYAL GUARD TO THE KING.
NOT MUCH VIGILANCE IS AN INDICATION OF HIS CONFIDENCE... HE HAS A STRONG CHARACTER.
HE MAY BE BEHIND ENEMY LINES, BUT THE SENSE OF RELIEF FROM LURING ME INTO HIS TRAP OUTWEIGHS THE REST... THAT'S HIS EMOTIONAL MATRIX.
"SPIRITUAL MESSAGE" ALLOWS POUF TO READ HIS OPPONENT'S PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE BY DIFFUSING BUTTERFLY SCALES INTO THE SURROUNDING AIR AND MAKING THE AURA FLOW DISTINCT.
HE ANALYZES THE BLEND OF 30 EMOTIONAL PATTERNS APPARENT IN THE AURA FLOW, AND FROM THAT HE CAN INFER HIS OPPONENT'S THOUGHTS.

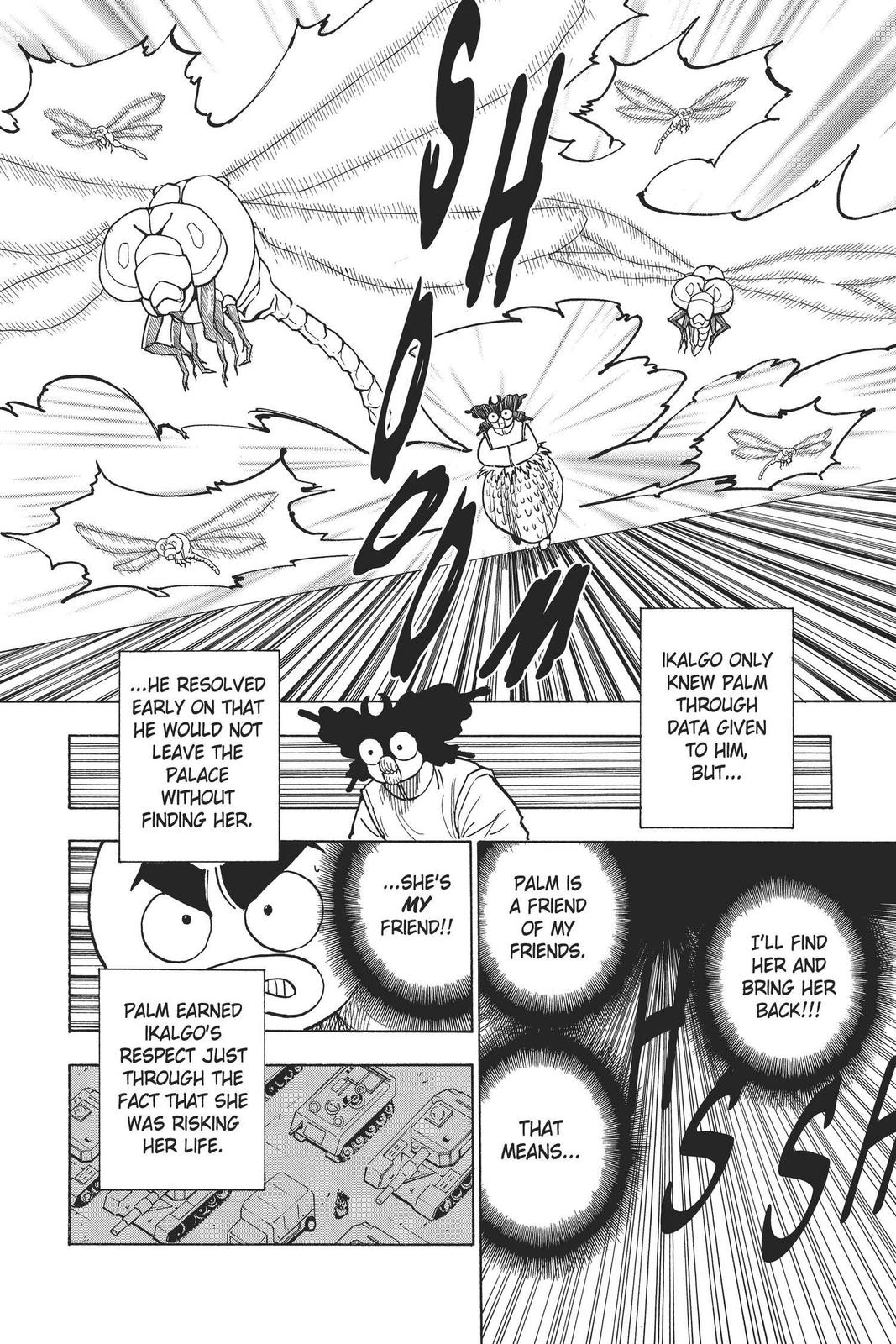

THE SWIRL OF VIGILANCE GROWS STRONGER.
HEH.
SO YOU WON'T EVEN TELL ME YOUR NAME.
IF YOU THINK I'M TRYING TO TRICK YOU INTO BREATHING IN THE SCALES, IT'S A TRAGIC MISUNDERSTANDING.
I'M RATHER HURT.
NOTHING MORE...

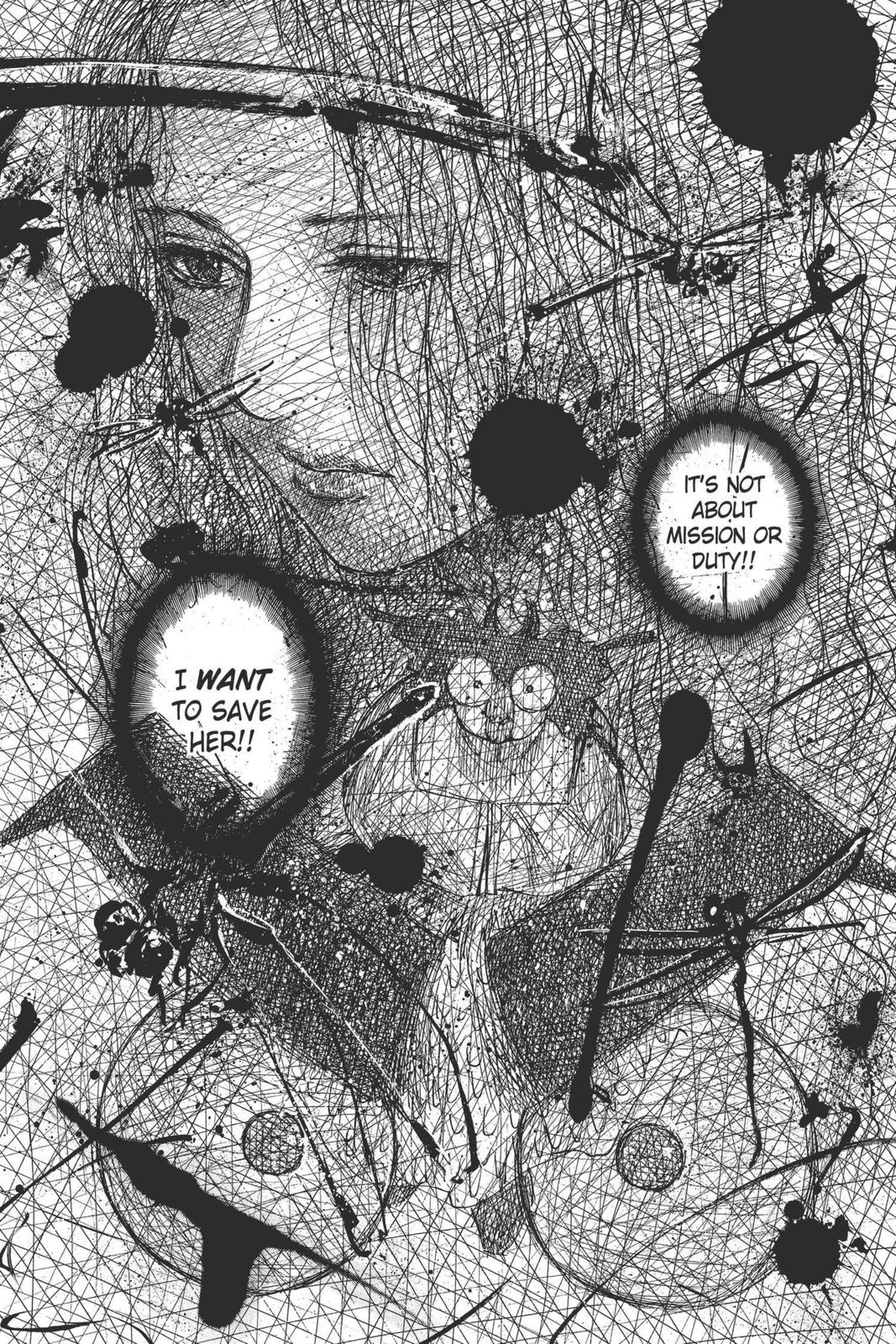
READ THIS WAY

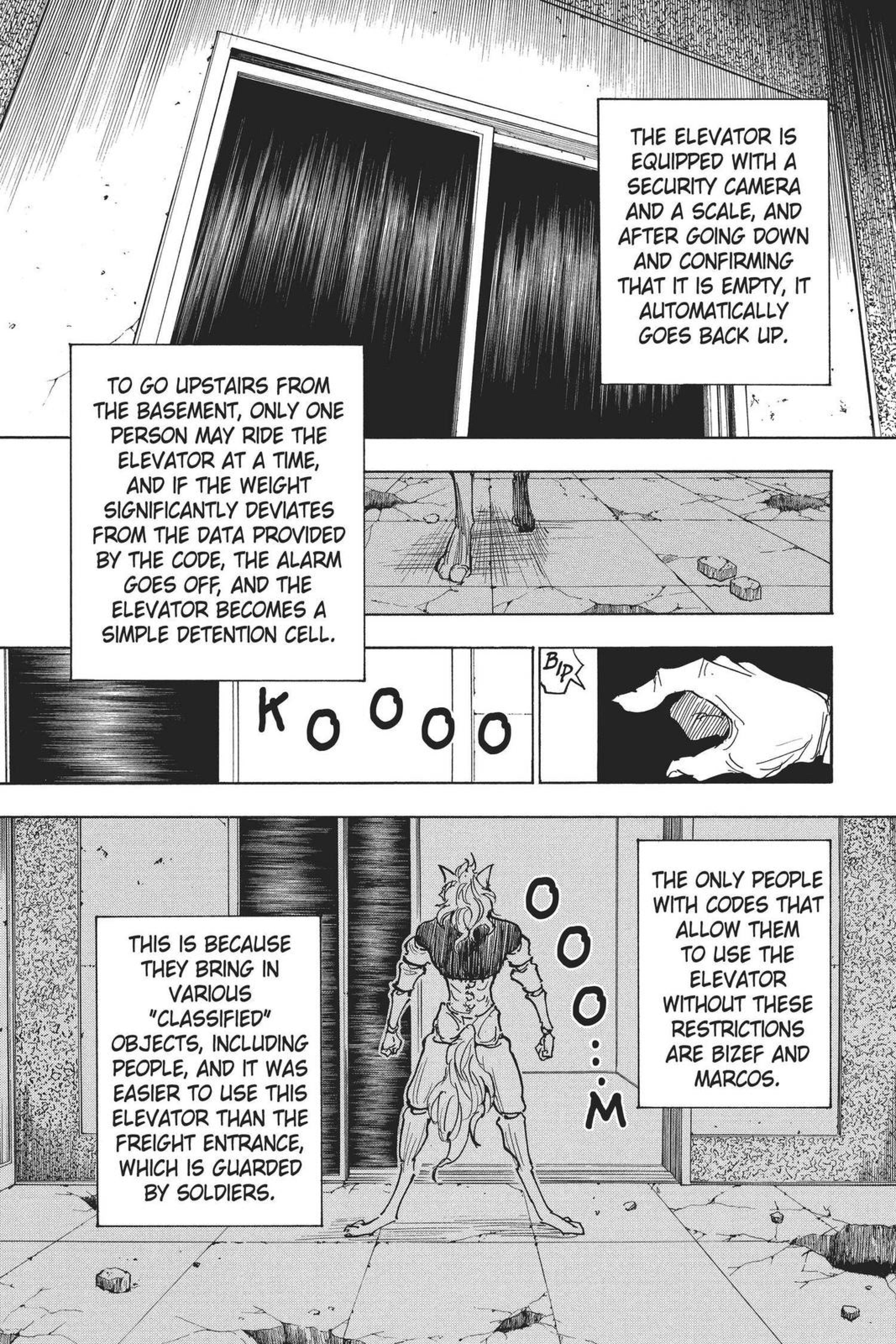

I WON'T EVEN REMEMBER WHEN I'M REBORN.
SPLK
QCH
HEE HEE, PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT... HEE HEE.
HEE.
PCH
SCH
HEE HEE.
HEE HEE.
IF HE WANTS TO TAKE TIME, SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!
NO MATTER *WHAT* HE TURNS INTO!!


THE ELEVATOR TO THE BASEMENT CAN BE DESCENDED BY ANYONE...
...BUT A CODE MUST BE ENTERED TO GO BACK UP.
WHIRR
EACH PERSON HAS A DIFFERENT EIGHT-DIGIT CODE SO THAT USAGE CAN BE TRACKED.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ Ⓔ ⓪ Ⓒ
IF A MISTAKE IS MADE, A SIREN GOES OFF, AND THE DOOR IS LOCKED.
KOOM
A REPEATED ERROR ALERTS THE SECURITY GUARDS, AND THE ELEVATOR IS FILLED WITH SLEEPING GAS. THE PERSON IS ARRESTED AND TORTURED... TO DEATH.

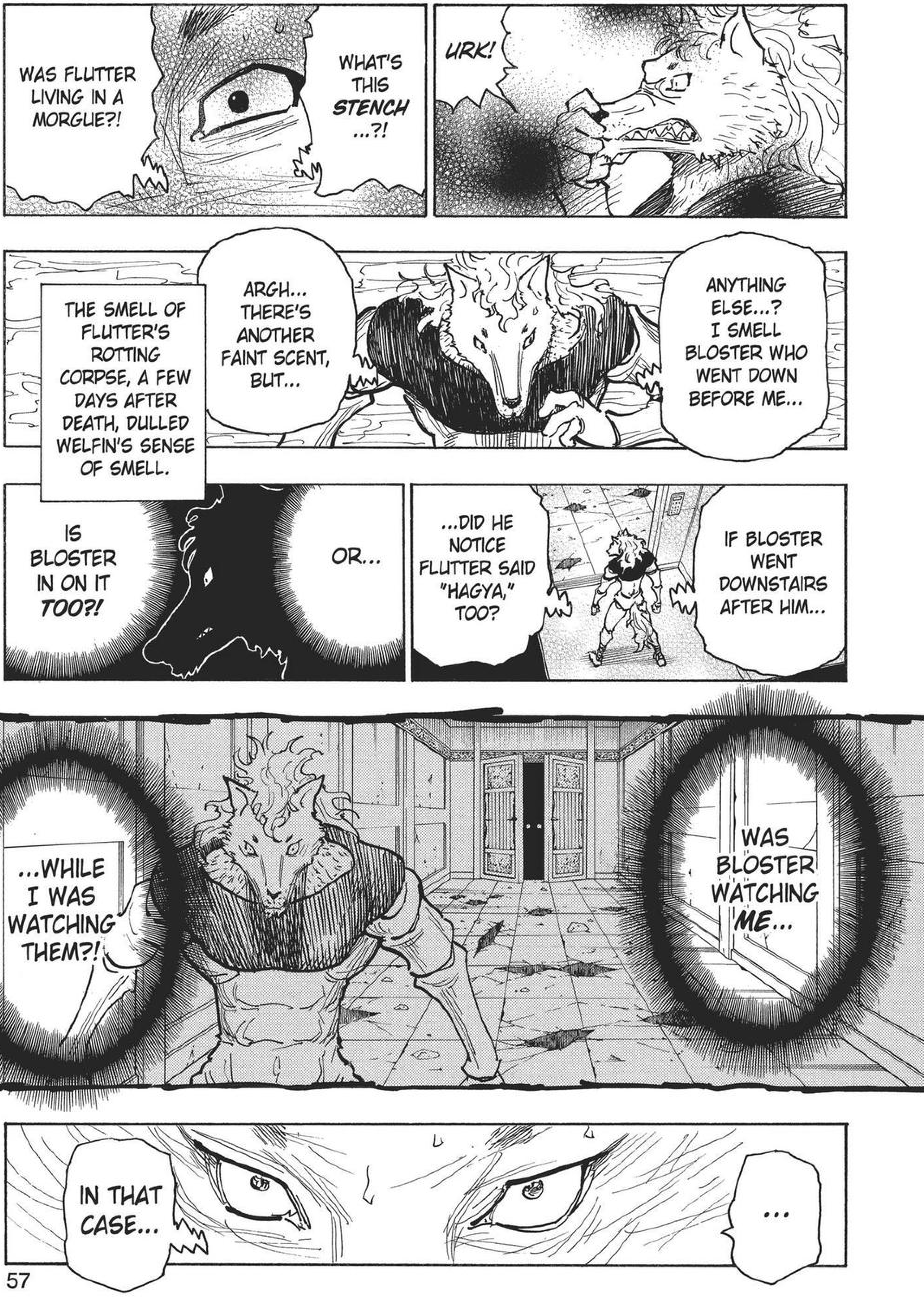

A COMPUTER KEEPS RECORDS, AND BIZEF CLOSELY MONITORS WHEN, HOW OFTEN AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE EACH CODE IS USED.
ANY SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR, AND THE OWNER OF THE CODE IS PUNISHED. NO EXCUSES. SO EVERYONE TREATS HIS CODE AS HE WOULD HIS OWN LIFE.
MARCOS ONLY GAVE HIS OWN CODE TO MOREL AS HIS FLIGHT OUT OF THE COUNTRY WAS ABOUT TO TAKE OFF.
WHOOOOO
SATELLITE DRAGONFLIES!

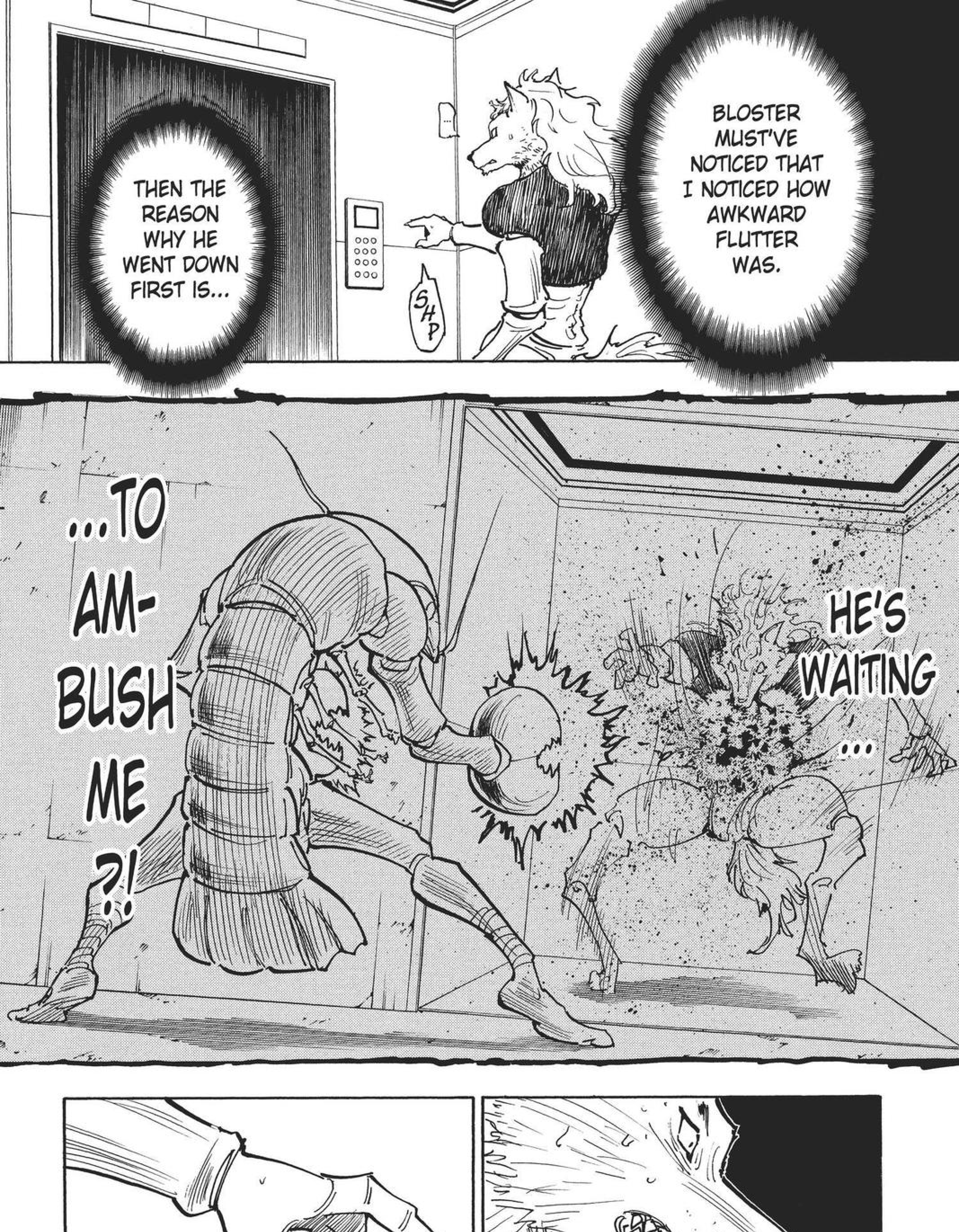

SHOOOM
IKALGO ONLY KNEW PALM THROUGH DATA GIVEN TO HIM, BUT...
...HE RESOLVED EARLY ON THAT HE WOULD NOT LEAVE THE PALACE WITHOUT FINDING HER.
PALM IS A FRIEND OF MY FRIENDS.
THAT MEANS...
...SHE'S **MY** FRIEND!!
I'LL FIND HER AND BRING HER BACK!!!
PALM EARNED IKALGO'S RESPECT JUST THROUGH THE FACT THAT SHE WAS RISKING HER LIFE.
HISSH

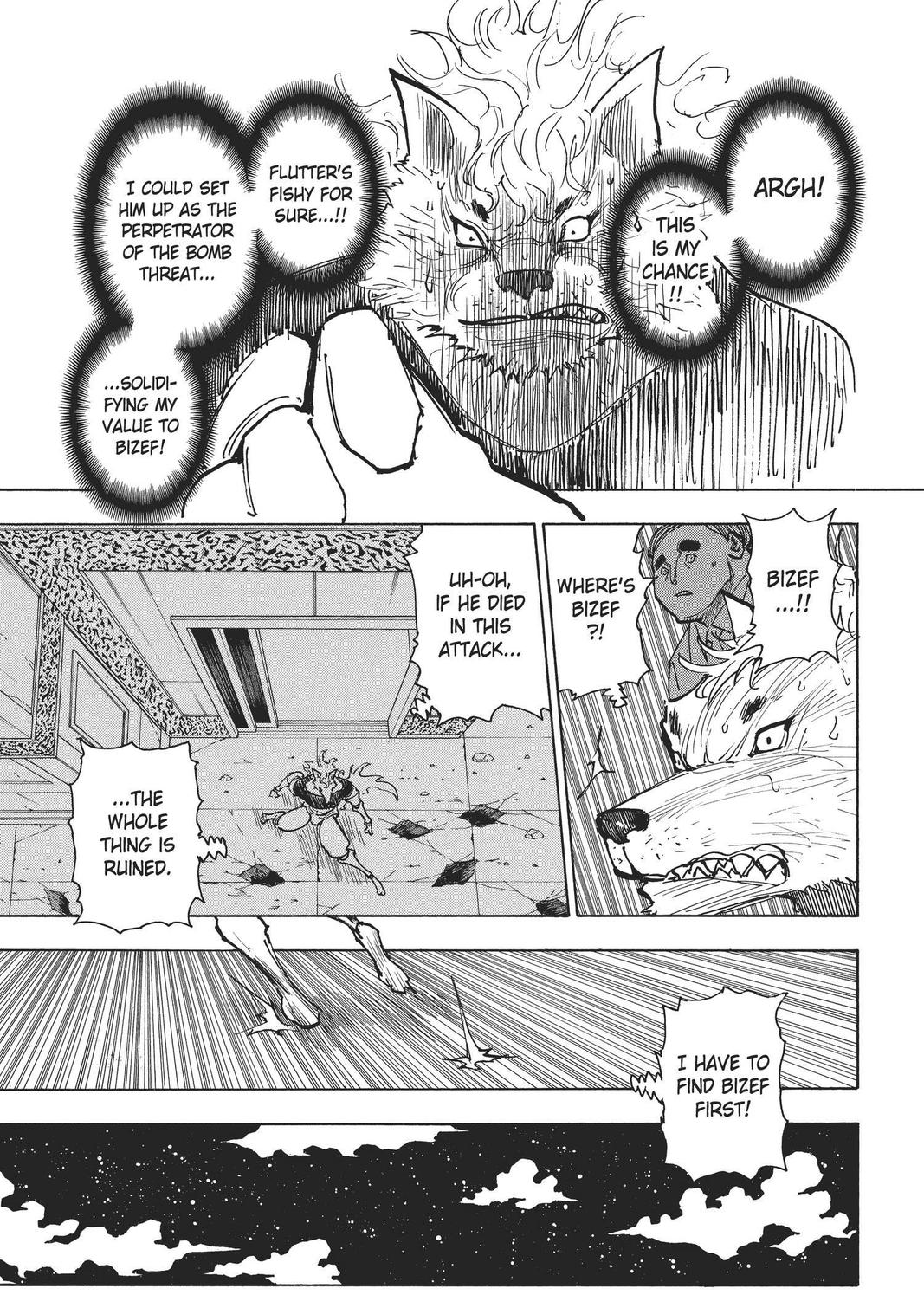

IT'S NOT ABOUT MISSION OR DUTY!!
I *WANT* TO SAVE HER!!

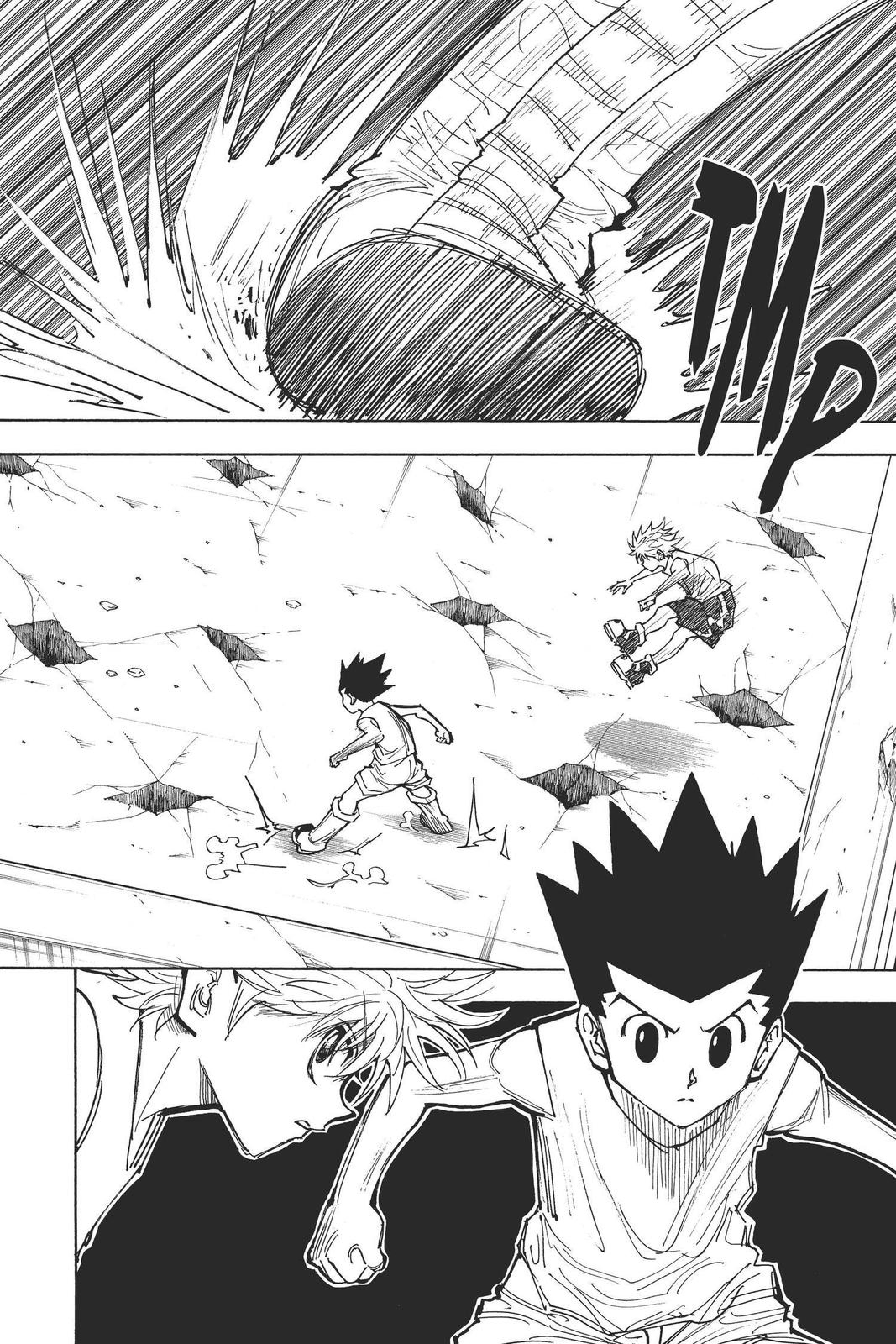

THE ELEVATOR IS EQUIPPED WITH A SECURITY CAMERA AND A SCALE, AND AFTER GOING DOWN AND CONFIRMING THAT IT IS EMPTY, IT AUTOMATICALLY GOES BACK UP.
TO GO UPSTAIRS FROM THE BASEMENT, ONLY ONE PERSON MAY RIDE THE ELEVATOR AT A TIME, AND IF THE WEIGHT SIGNIFICANTLY DEVIATES FROM THE DATA PROVIDED BY THE CODE, THE ALARM GOES OFF, AND THE ELEVATOR BECOMES A SIMPLE DETENTION CELL.
BIP
KOOOO
THE ONLY PEOPLE WITH CODES THAT ALLOW THEM TO USE THE ELEVATOR WITHOUT THESE RESTRICTIONS ARE BIZEF AND MARCOS.
OOO...M
THIS IS BECAUSE THEY BRING IN VARIOUS "CLASSIFIED" OBJECTS, INCLUDING PEOPLE, AND IT WAS EASIER TO USE THIS ELEVATOR THAN THE FREIGHT ENTRANCE, WHICH IS GUARDED BY SOLDIERS.

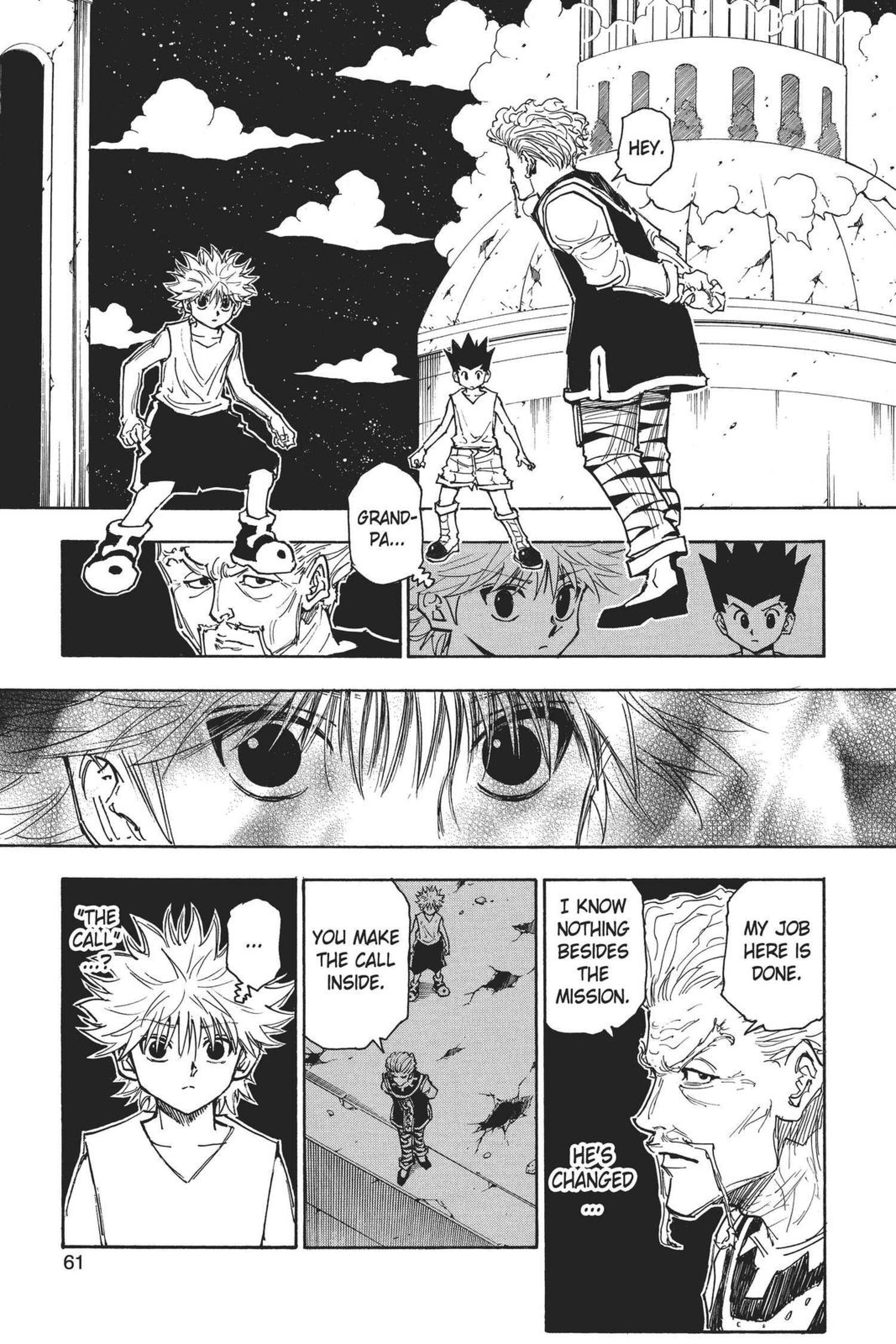
READ THIS WAY

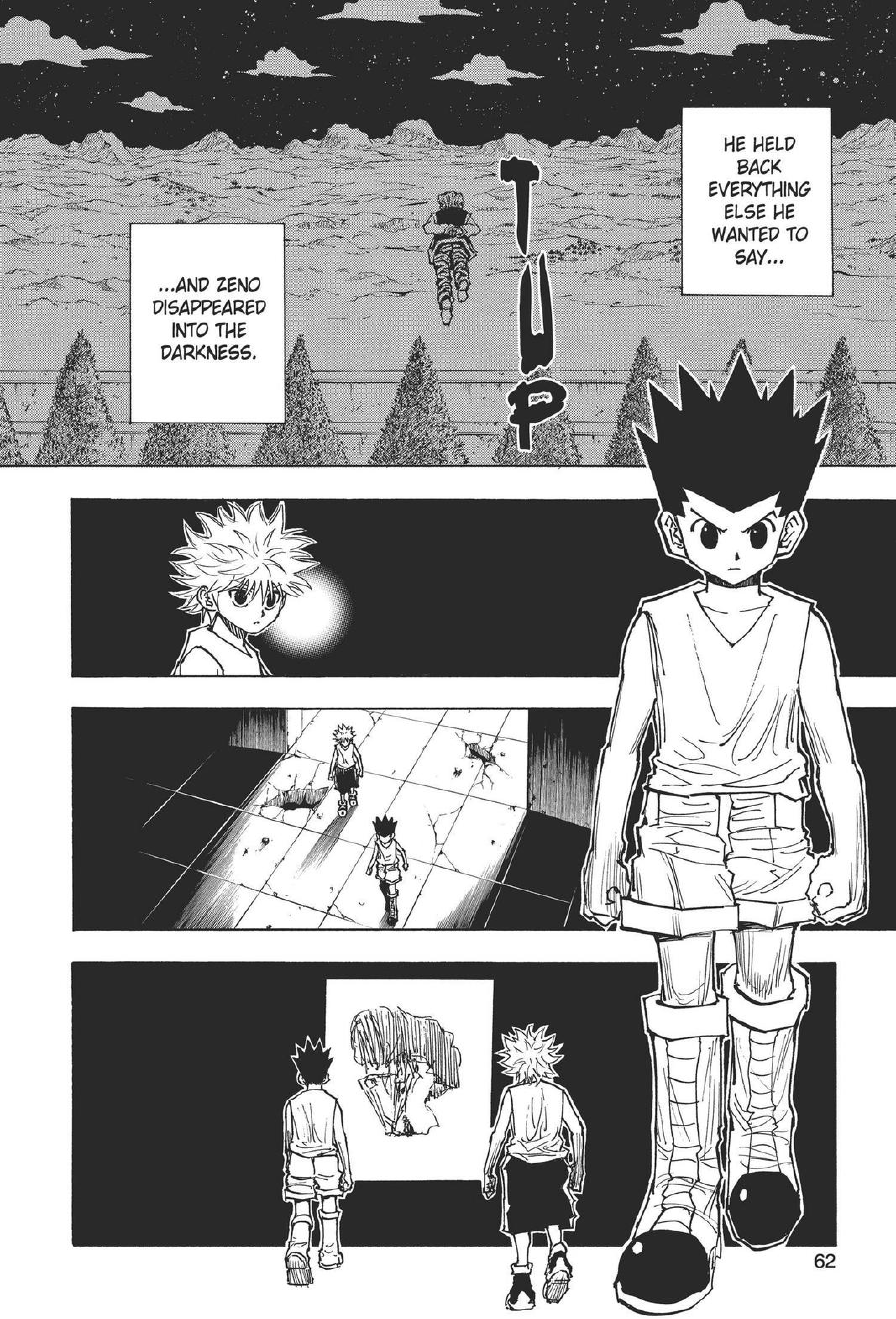

URK!
WHAT'S THIS STENCH...?!
WAS FLUTTER LIVING IN A MORGUE?!
ANYTHING ELSE...? I SMELL BLOSTER WHO WENT DOWN BEFORE ME...
ARGH... THERE'S ANOTHER FAINT SCENT, BUT...
THE SMELL OF FLUTTER'S ROTTING CORPSE, A FEW DAYS AFTER DEATH, DULLED WELFIN'S SENSE OF SMELL.
IF BLOSTER WENT DOWNSTAIRS AFTER HIM...
...DID HE NOTICE FLUTTER SAID "HAGYA," TOO?
OR...
IS BLOSTER IN ON IT *TOO?!*
WAS BLOSTER WATCHING *ME*...
...WHILE I WAS WATCHING THEM?!
...
IN THAT CASE...

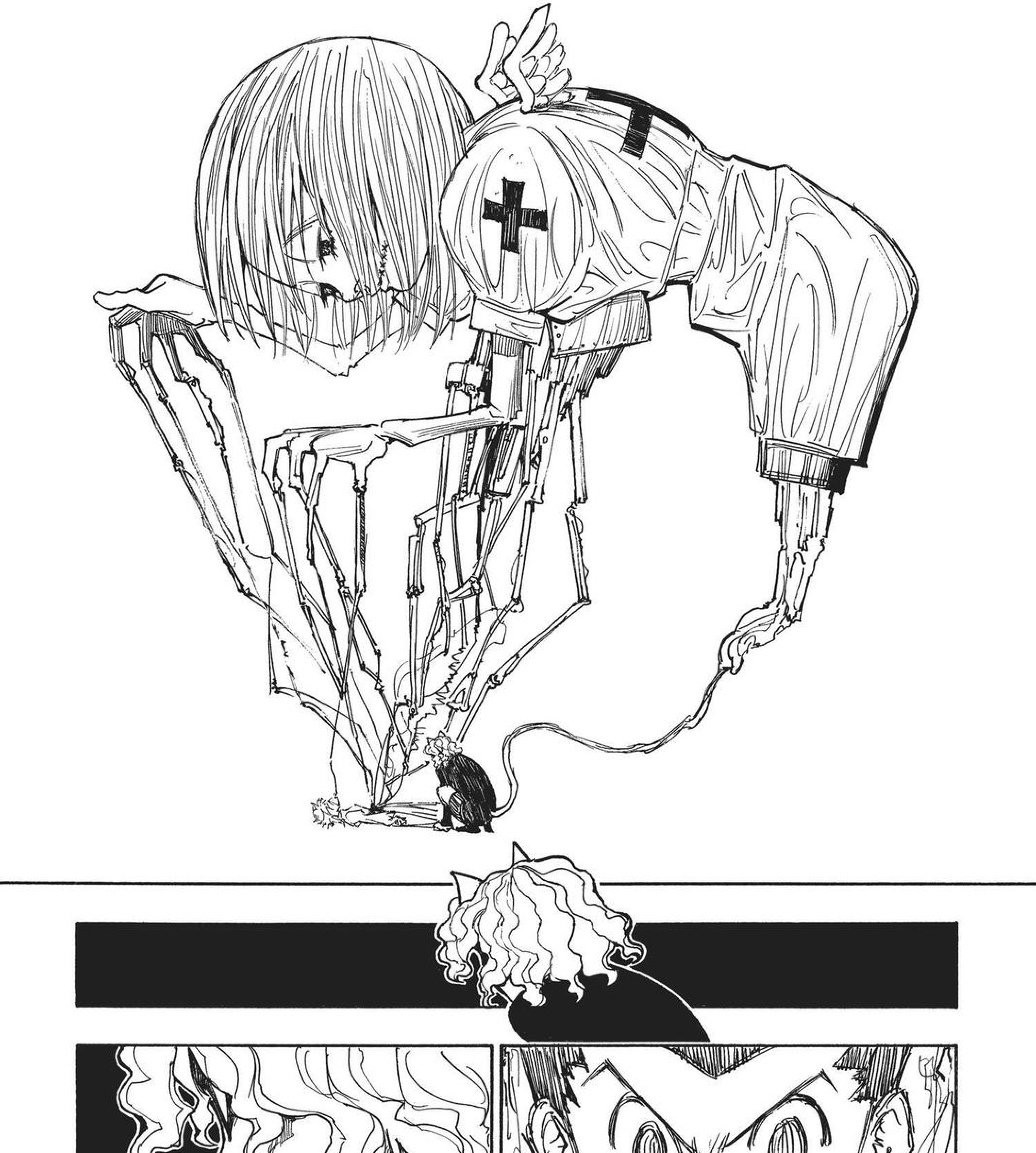

BLOSTER MUST'VE NOTICED THAT I NOTICED HOW AWKWARD FLUTTER WAS.
SHP
THEN THE REASON WHY HE WENT DOWN FIRST IS...
HE'S WAITING...
...TO AMBUSH ME?!

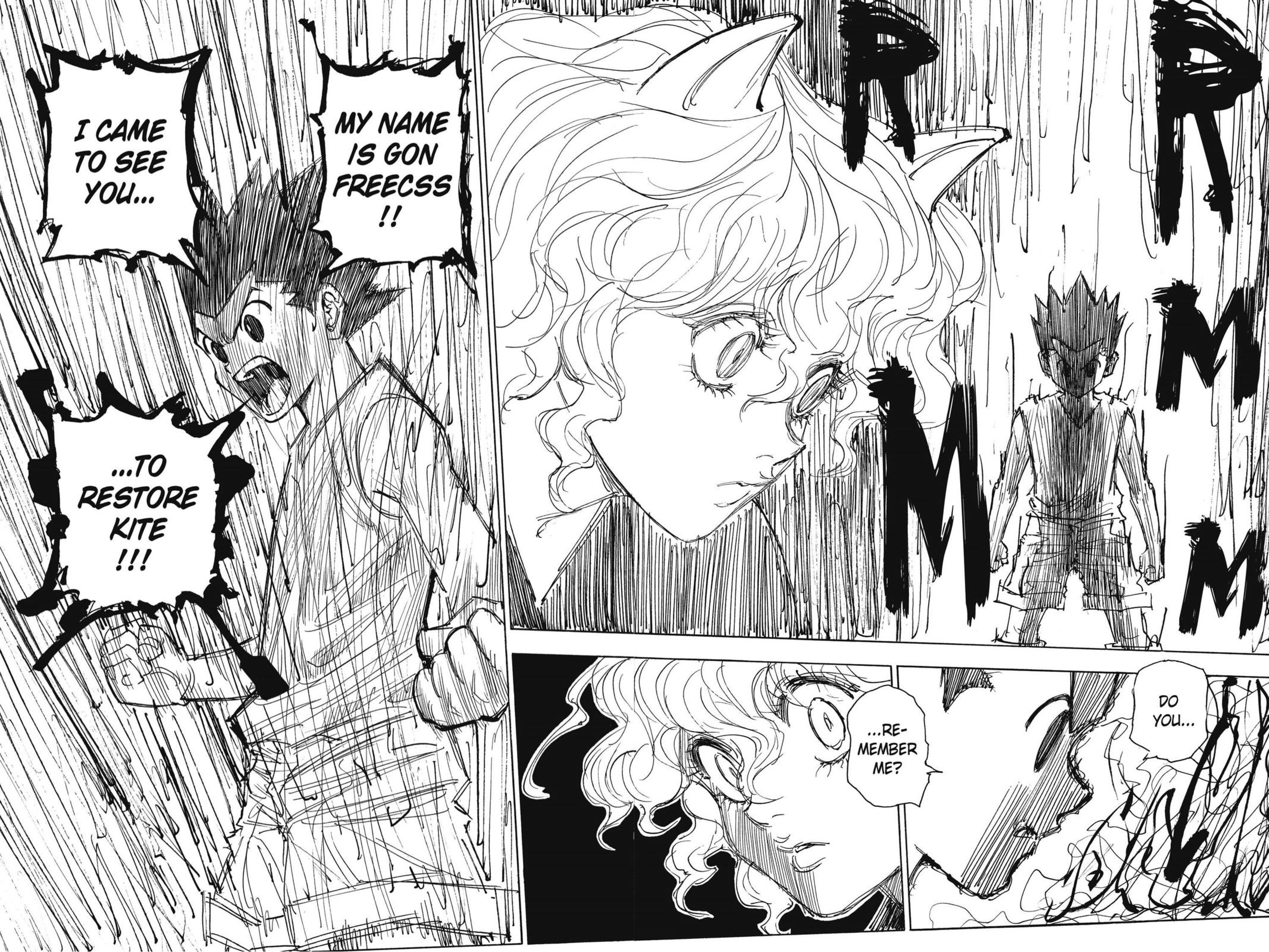

ARGH!
THIS IS MY CHANCE!!
FLUTTER'S FISHY FOR SURE...!!
I COULD SET HIM UP AS THE PERPETRATOR OF THE BOMB THREAT...
...SOLIDIFYING MY VALUE TO BIZEF!
BIZEF ...!!
WHERE'S BIZEF ?!
UH-OH, IF HE DIED IN THIS ATTACK...
...THE WHOLE THING IS RUINED.
I HAVE TO FIND BIZEF FIRST!

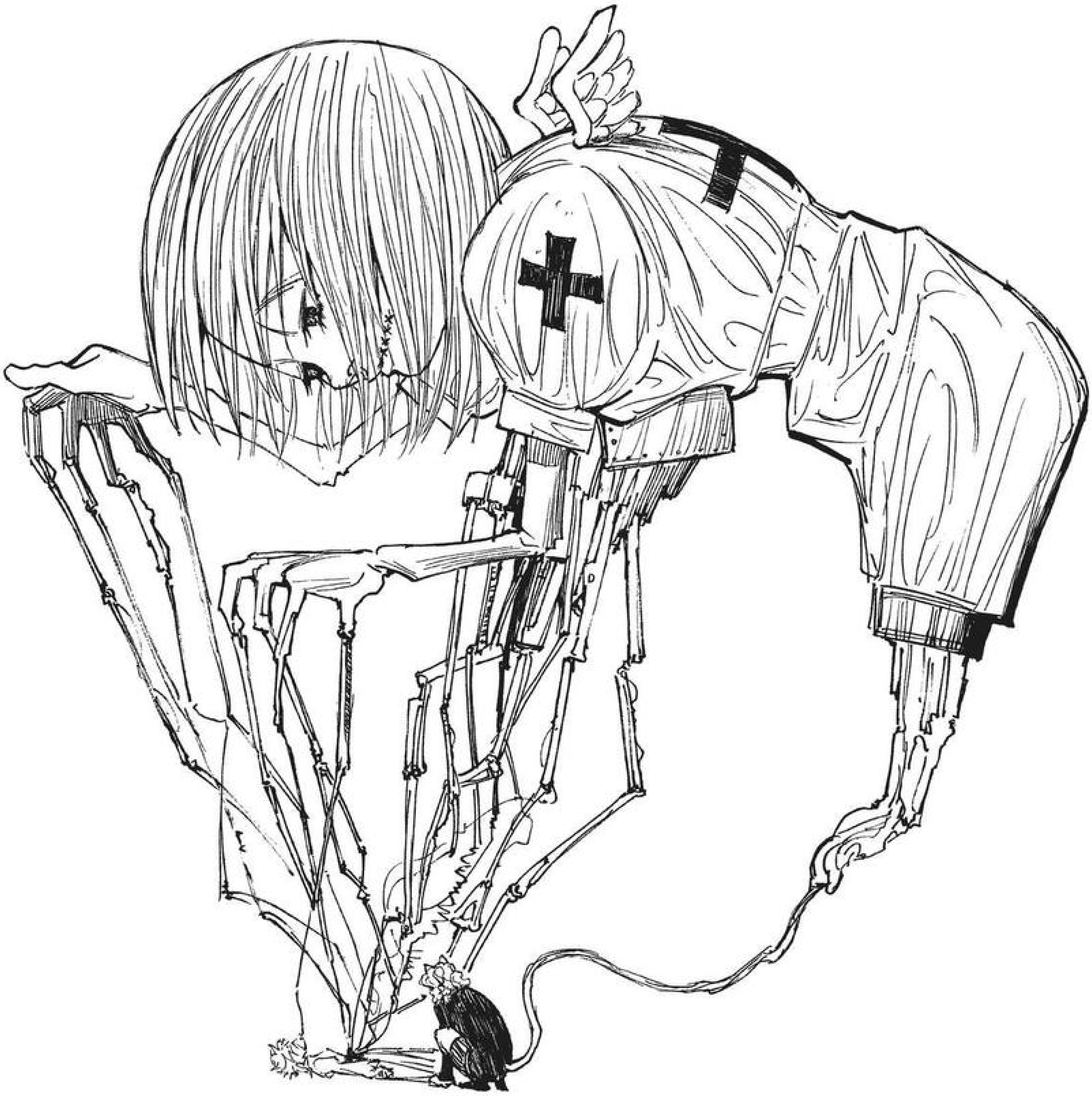

TMP


HEY.
GRAND-PA...
MY JOB HERE IS DONE.
I KNOW NOTHING BESIDES THE MISSION.
HE'S CHANGED ...
YOU MAKE THE CALL INSIDE.
...
"THE CALL" ...?

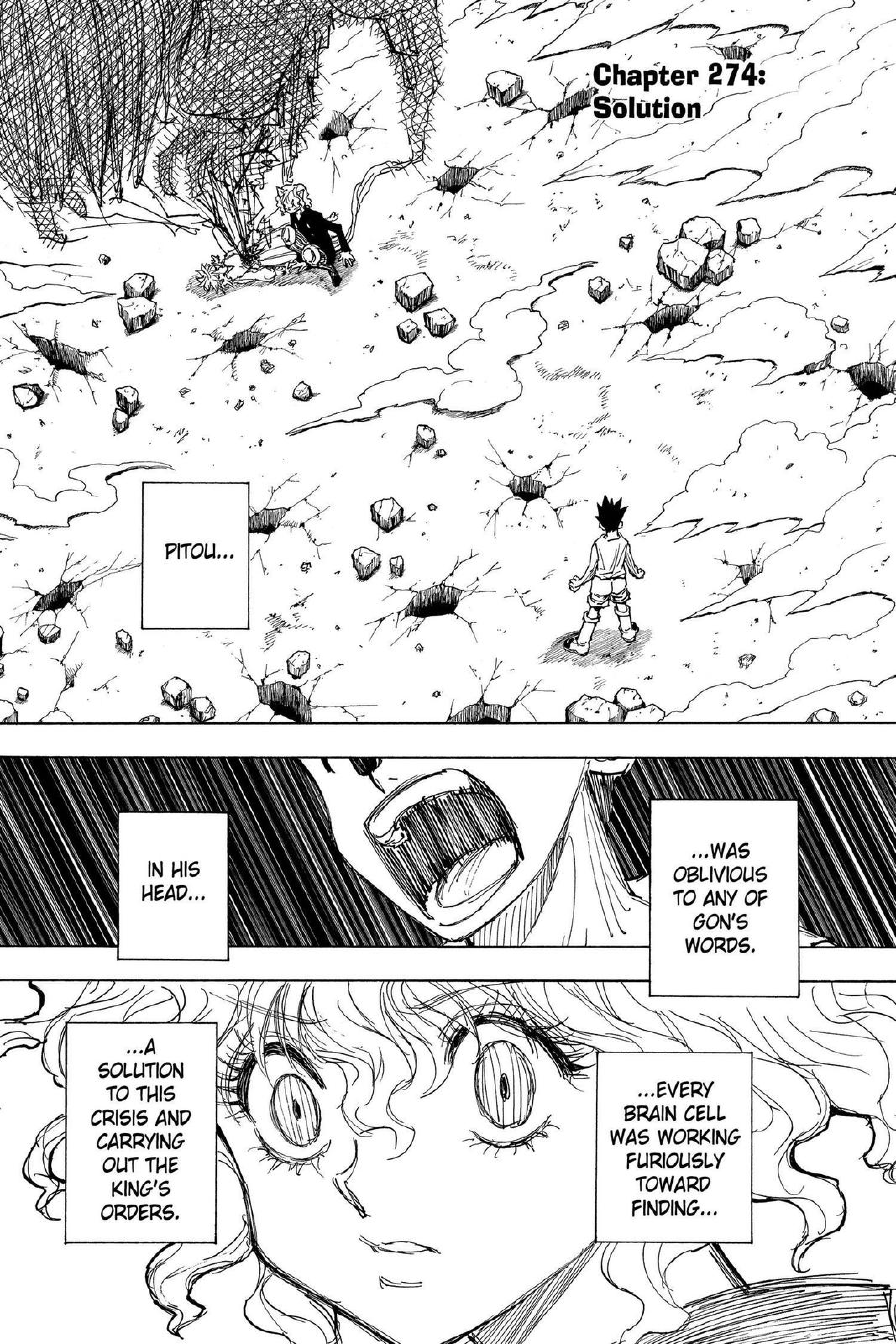

HE HELD BACK EVERYTHING ELSE HE WANTED TO SAY...
TUP
...AND ZENO DISAPPEARED INTO THE DARKNESS.

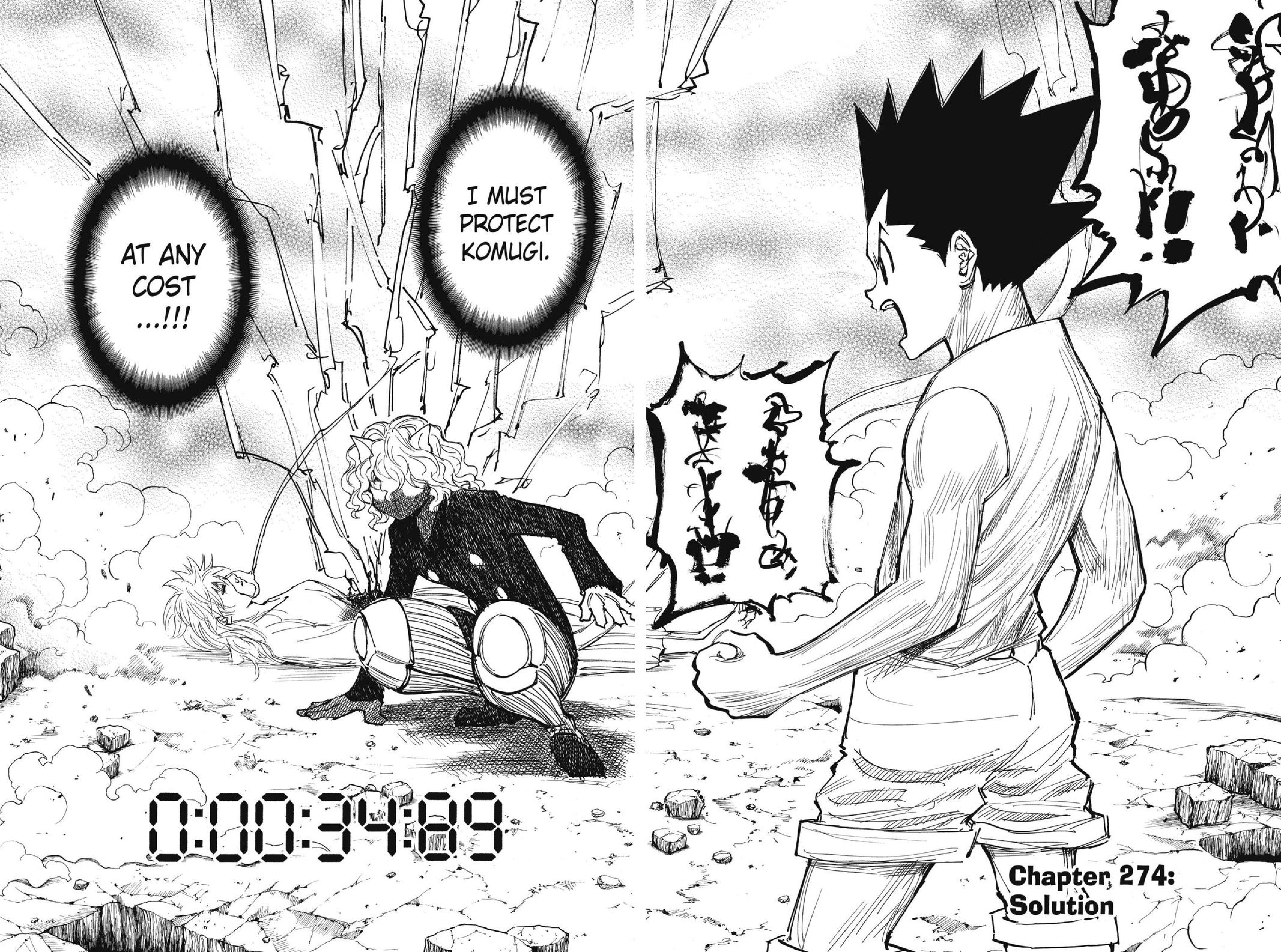



RRMMM
DO YOU...
...RE-MEMBER ME?
MY NAME IS GON FREECSS !!
I CAME TO SEE YOU...
...TO RESTORE KITE !!!

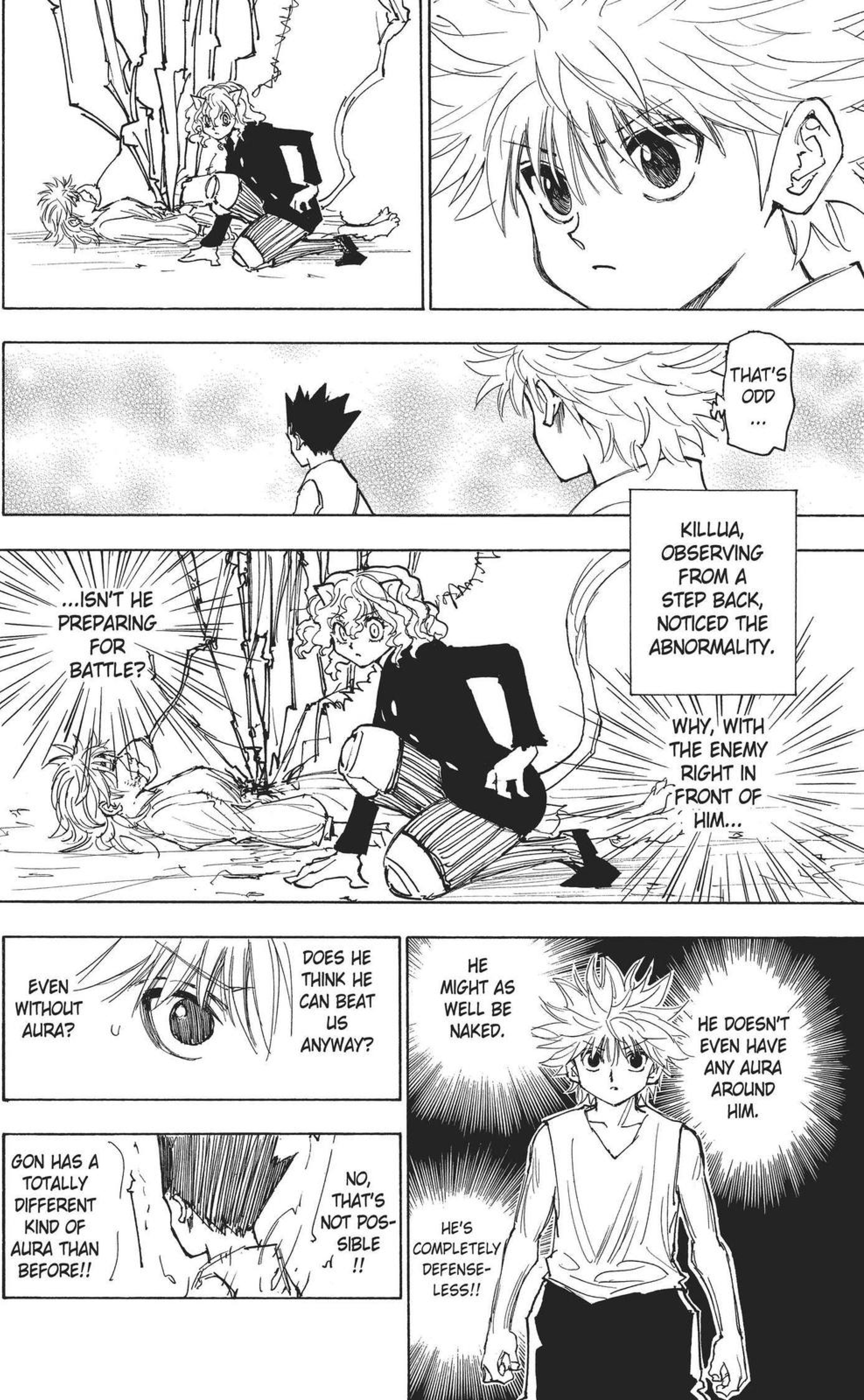


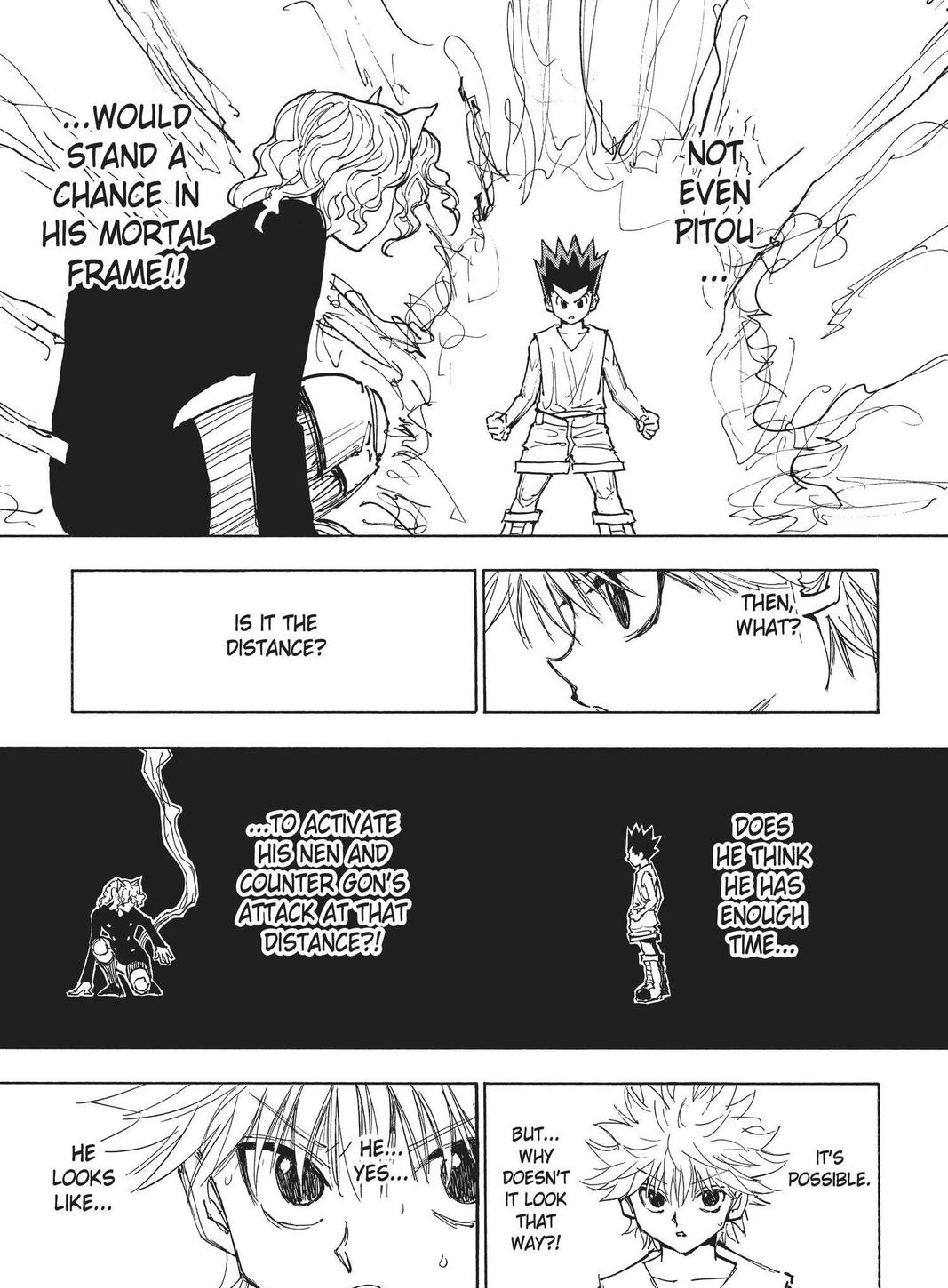
Chapter 274: Solution

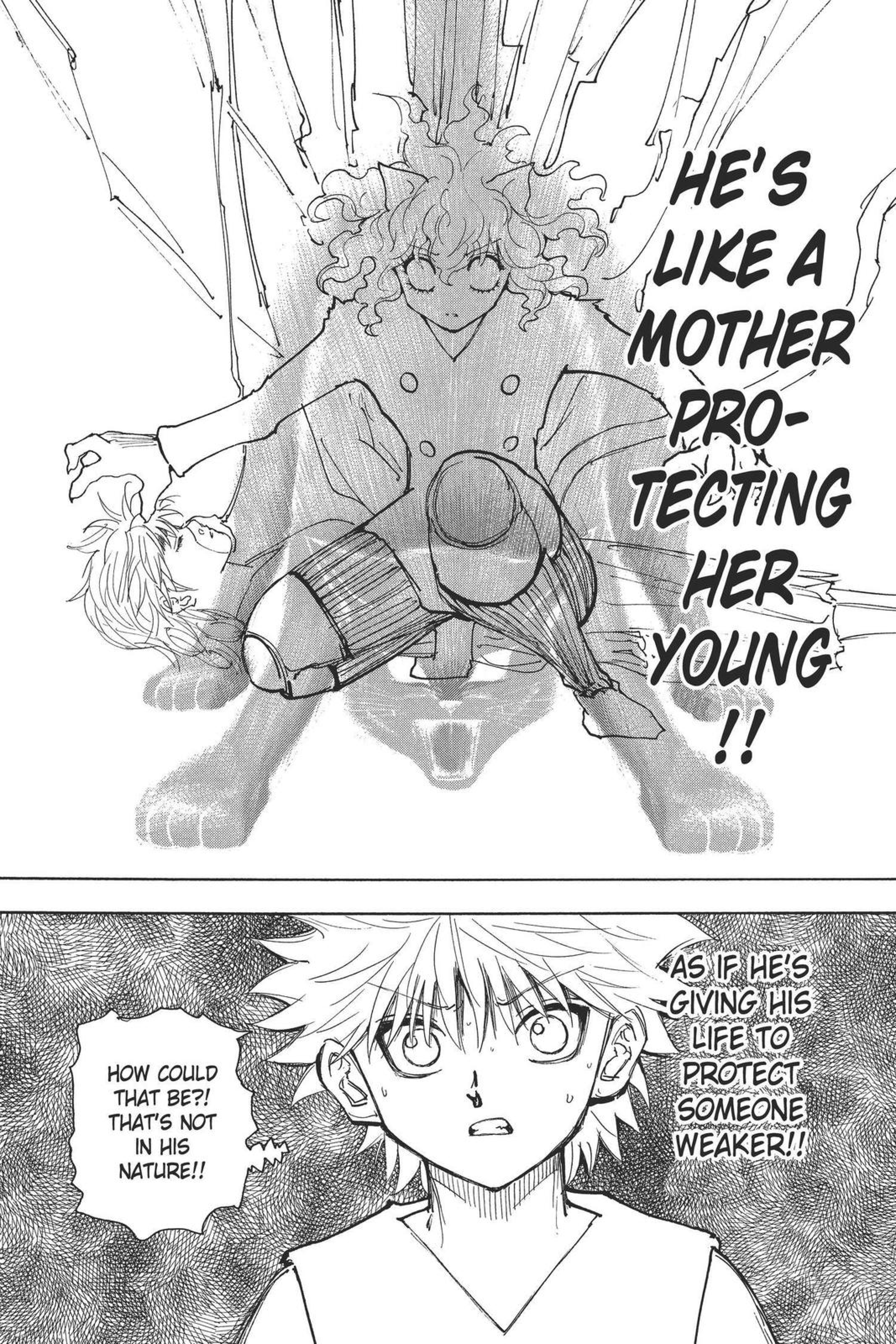

PITOU...
...WAS OBLIVIOUS TO ANY OF GON'S WORDS.
IN HIS HEAD...
...EVERY BRAIN CELL WAS WORKING FURIOUSLY TOWARD FINDING...
...A SOLUTION TO THIS CRISIS AND CARRYING OUT THE KING'S ORDERS.

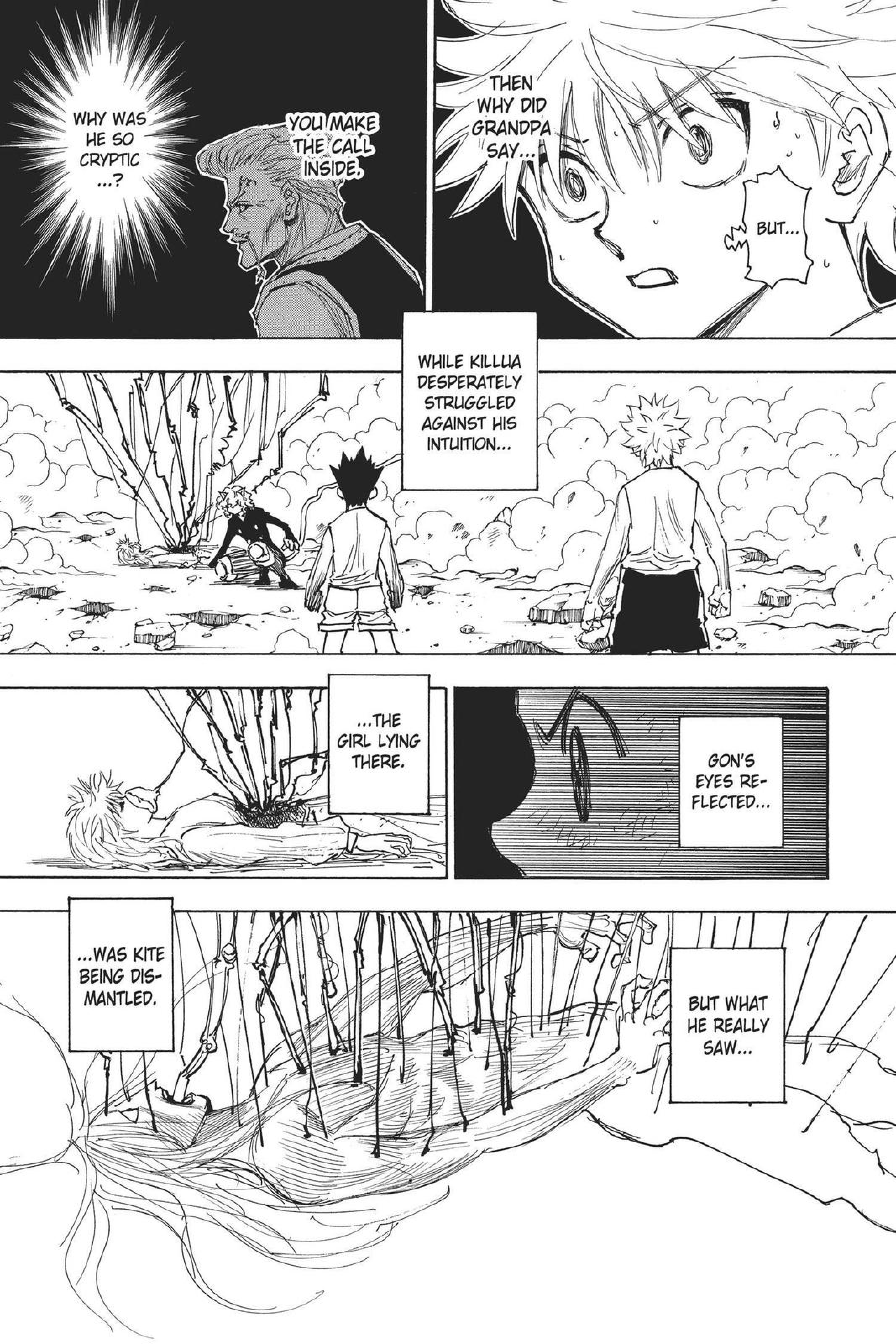

I MUST PROTECT KOMUGI.
AT ANY COST ...!!!
0:00:34:69

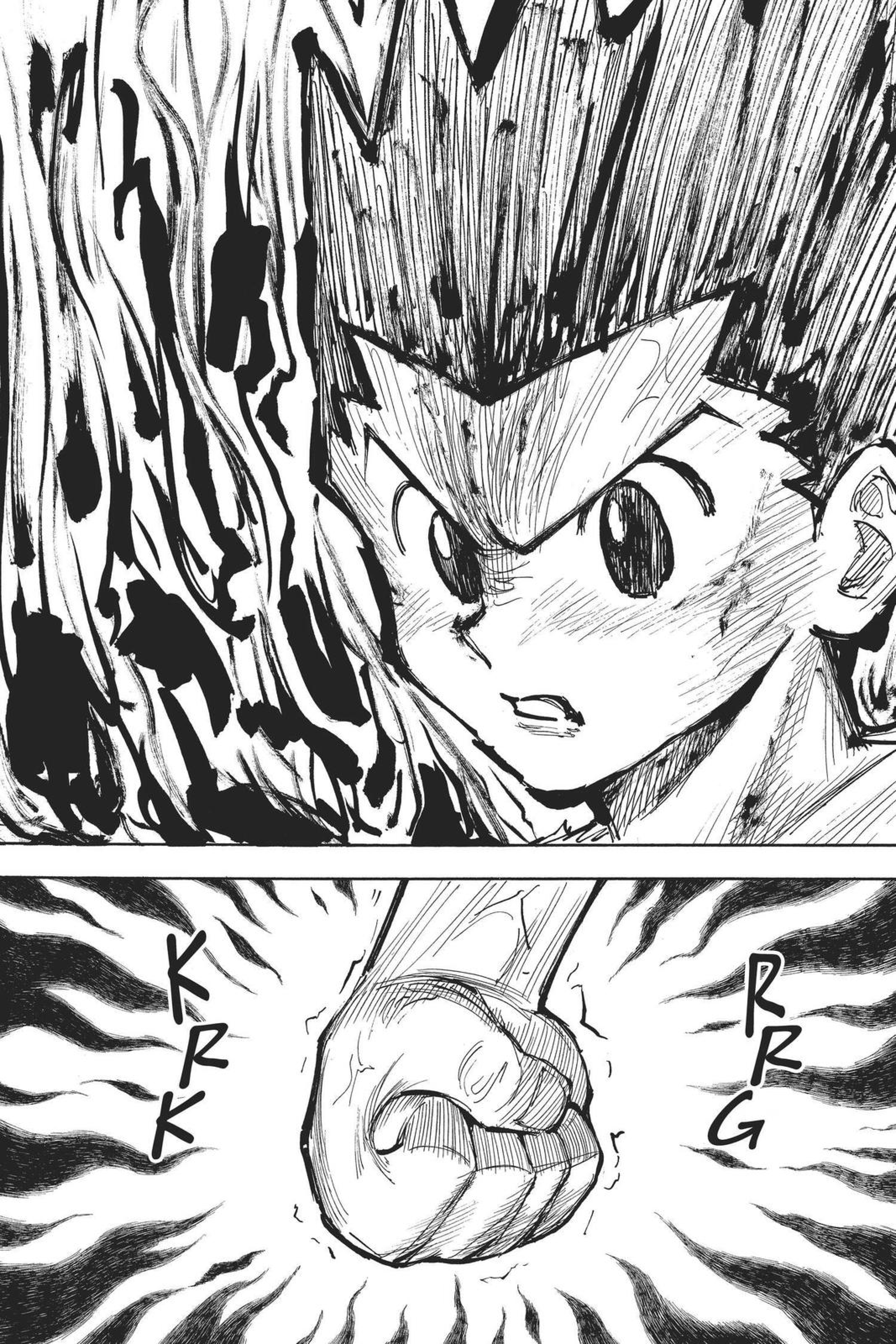
Chapter 274: Solution

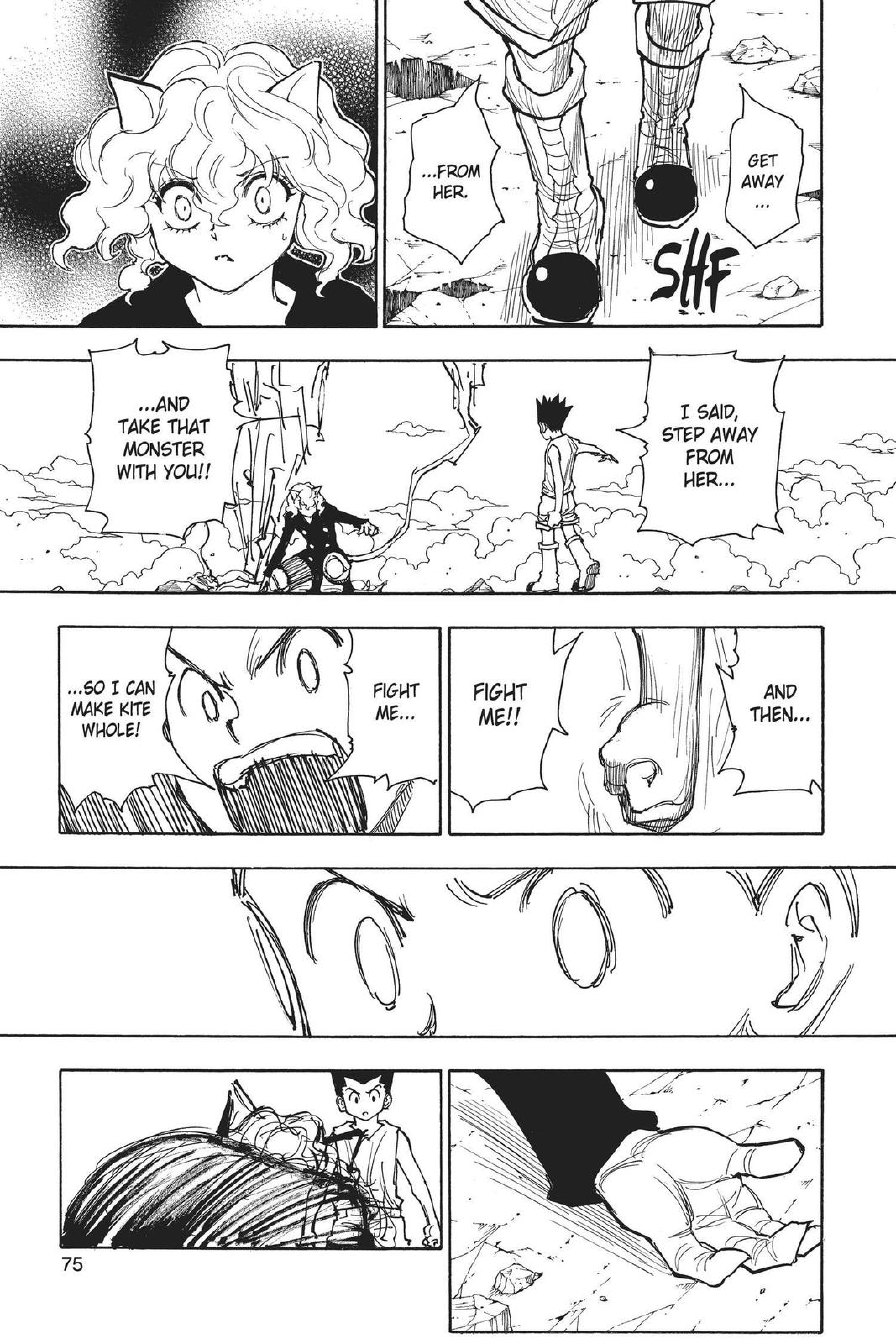

THAT'S ODD...
KILLUA, OBSERVING FROM A STEP BACK, NOTICED THE ABNORMALITY.
WHY, WITH THE ENEMY RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM...
...ISN'T HE PREPARING FOR BATTLE?
HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE ANY AURA AROUND HIM.
HE MIGHT AS WELL BE NAKED.
HE'S COMPLETELY DEFENSELESS!!
DOES HE THINK HE CAN BEAT US ANYWAY?
EVEN WITHOUT AURA?
NO, THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!!
GON HAS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT KIND OF AURA THAN BEFORE!!

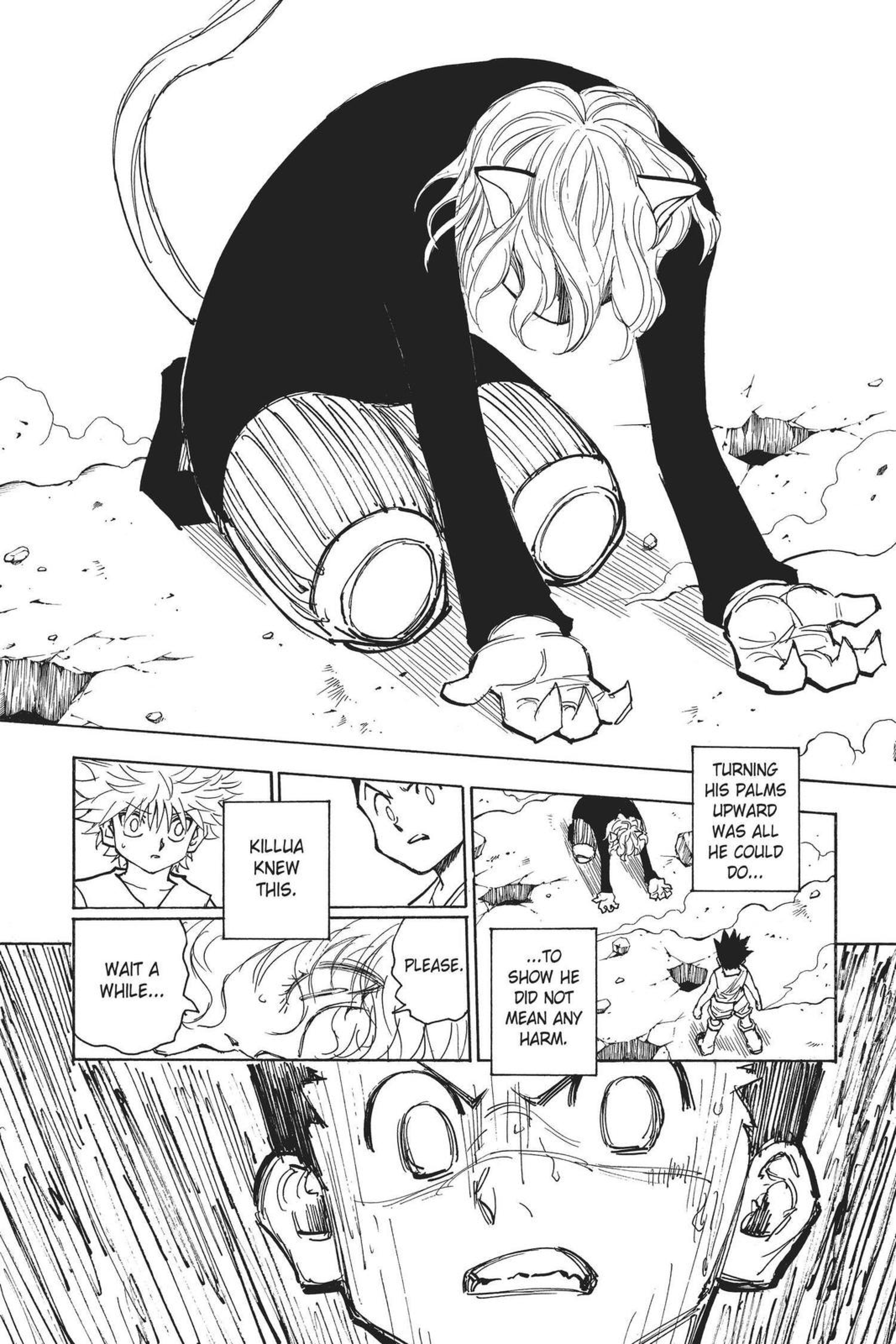

NOT EVEN PITOU…
…WOULD STAND A CHANCE IN HIS MORTAL FRAME!!
THEN, WHAT?
IS IT THE DISTANCE?
DOES HE THINK HE HAS ENOUGH TIME…
…TO ACTIVATE HIS NEN AND COUNTER GON'S ATTACK AT THAT DISTANCE?!
IT'S POSSIBLE.
BUT… WHY DOESN'T IT LOOK THAT WAY?!
HE… YES…
HE LOOKS LIKE…

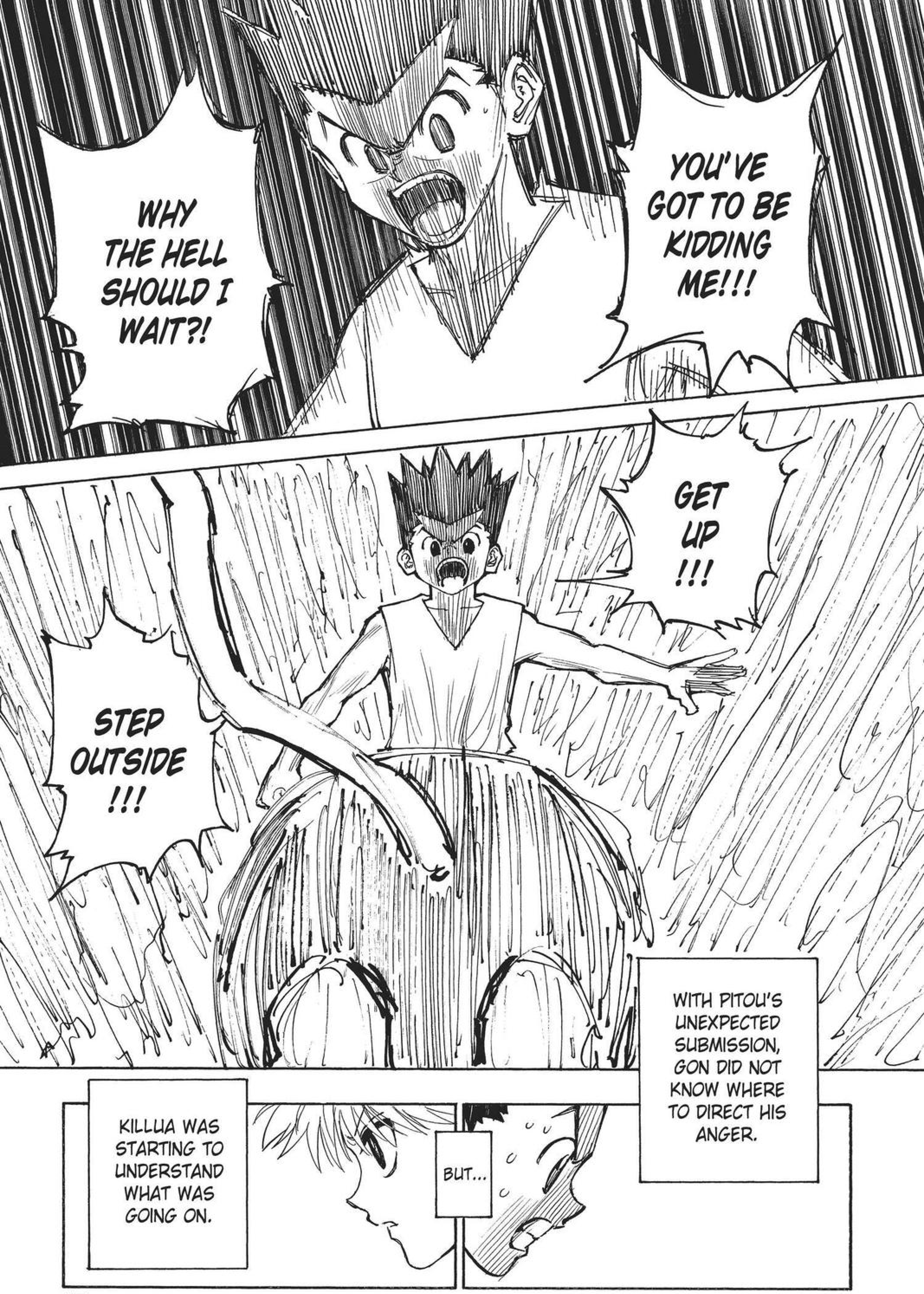

HE'S LIKE A MOTHER PROTECTING HER YOUNG!!
AS IF HE'S GIVING HIS LIFE TO PROTECT SOMEONE WEAKER!!
HOW COULD THAT BE?! THAT'S NOT IN HIS NATURE!!

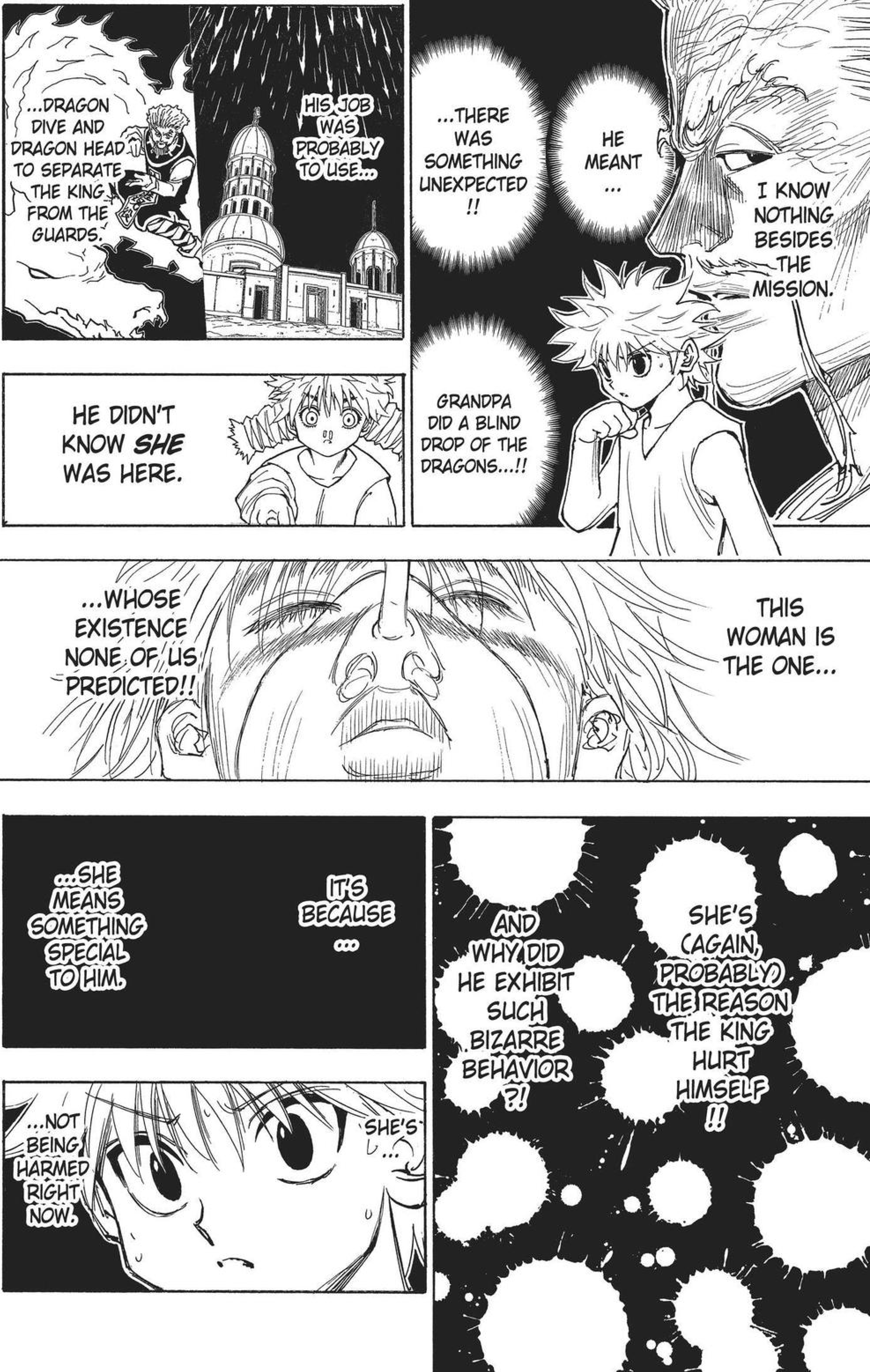

BUT...
THEN WHY DID GRANDPA SAY...
YOU MAKE THE CALL INSIDE.
WHY WAS HE SO CRYPTIC ...?
WHILE KILLUA DESPERATELY STRUGGLED AGAINST HIS INTUITION...
GON'S EYES REFLECTED...
...THE GIRL LYING THERE.
BUT WHAT HE REALLY SAW...
...WAS KITE BEING DISMANTLED.

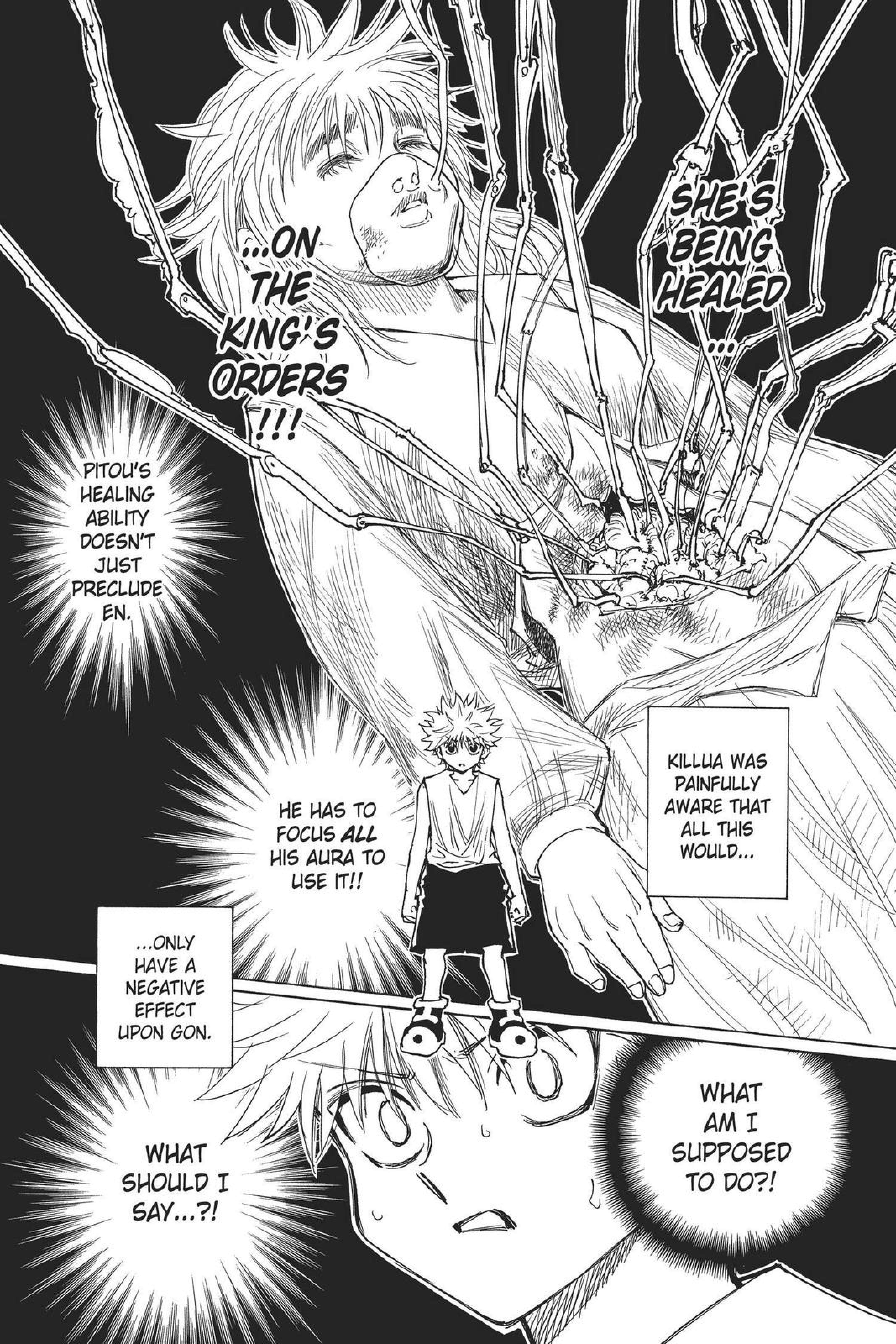

RRG
KRRK

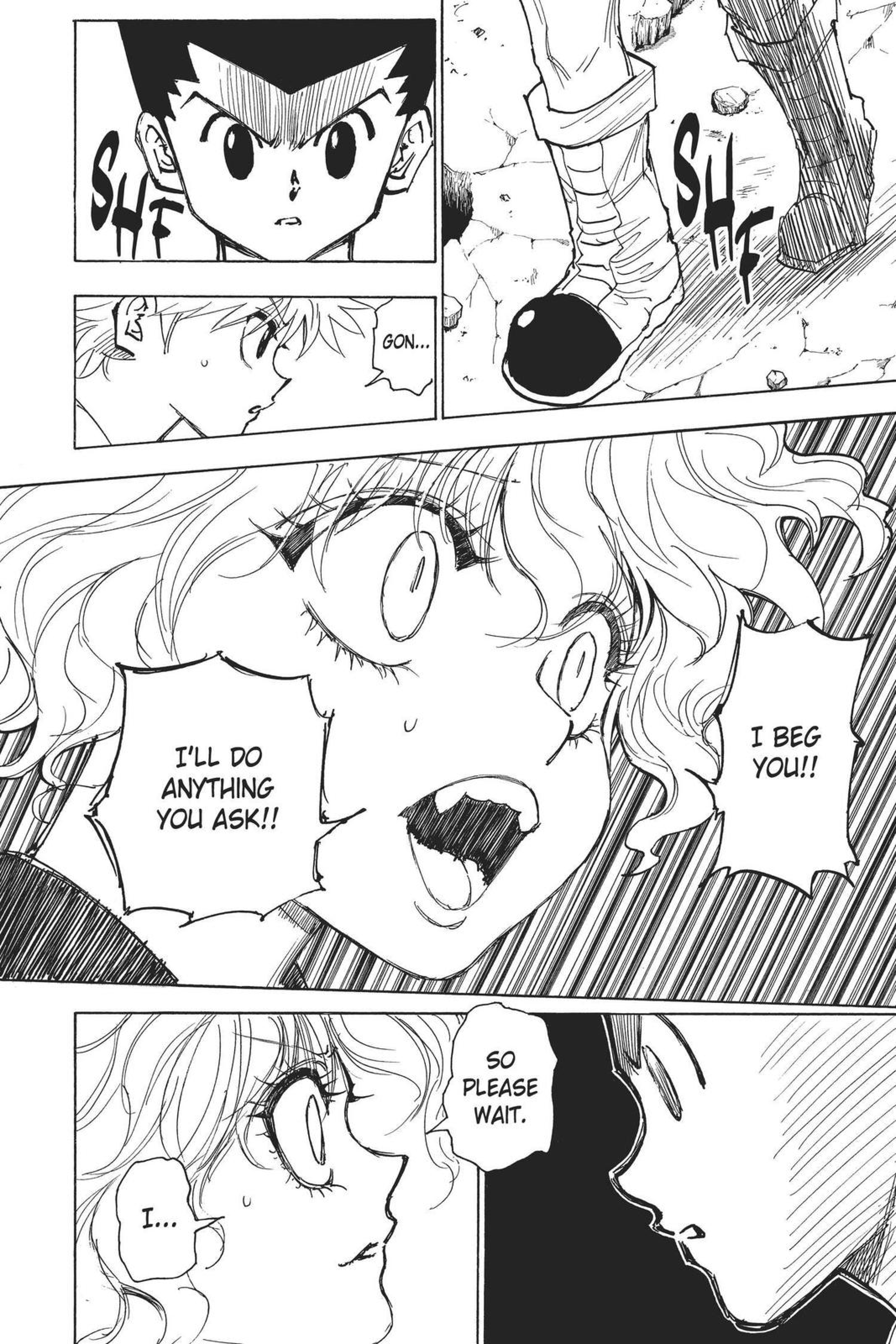

GET AWAY ...
...FROM HER.
SHF
I SAID, STEP AWAY FROM HER...
...AND TAKE THAT MONSTER WITH YOU!!
AND THEN...
FIGHT ME!!
FIGHT ME...
...SO I CAN MAKE KITE WHOLE!

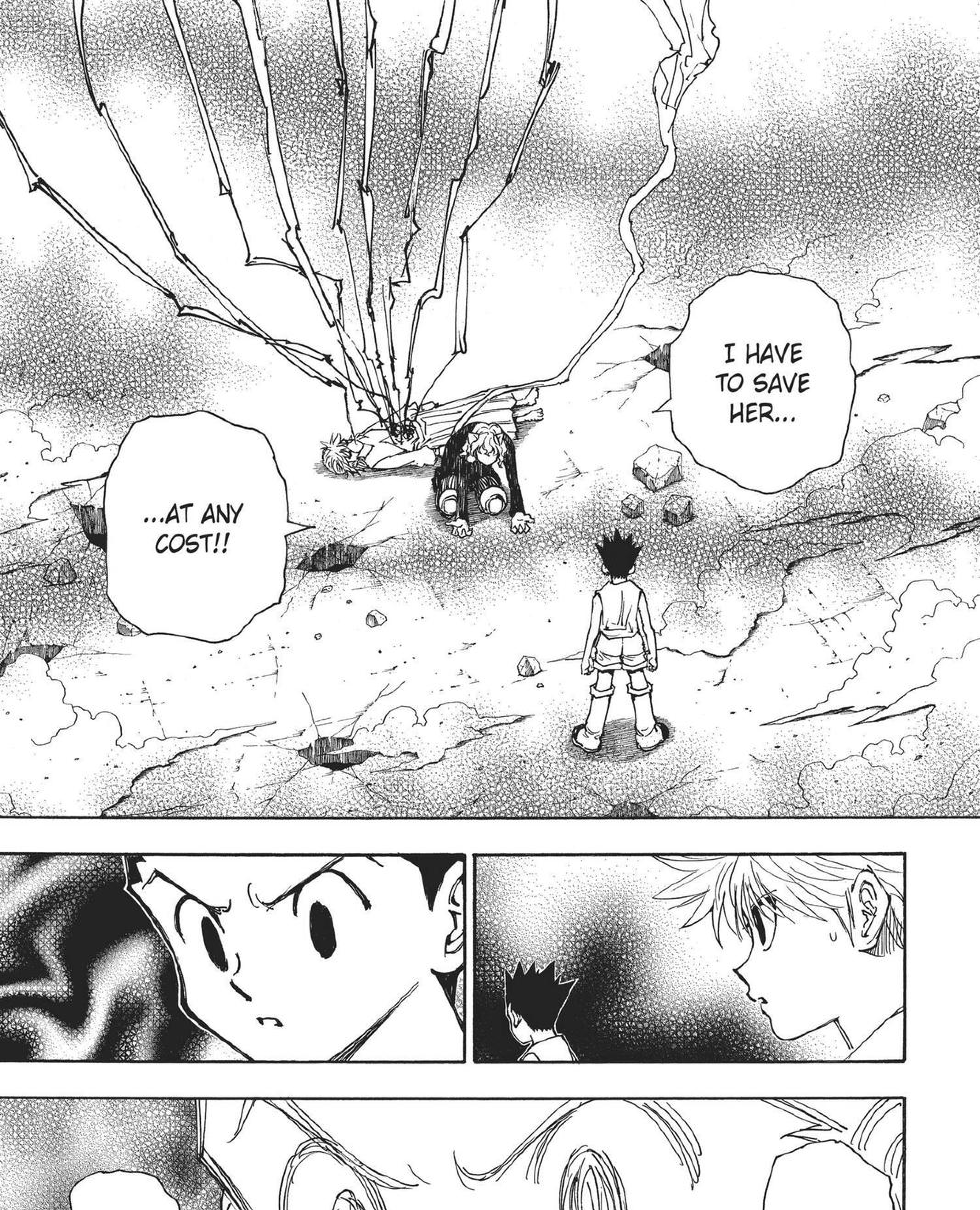

TURNING HIS PALMS UPWARD WAS ALL HE COULD DO...
...TO SHOW HE DID NOT MEAN ANY HARM.
KILLUA KNEW THIS.
PLEASE.
WAIT A WHILE...

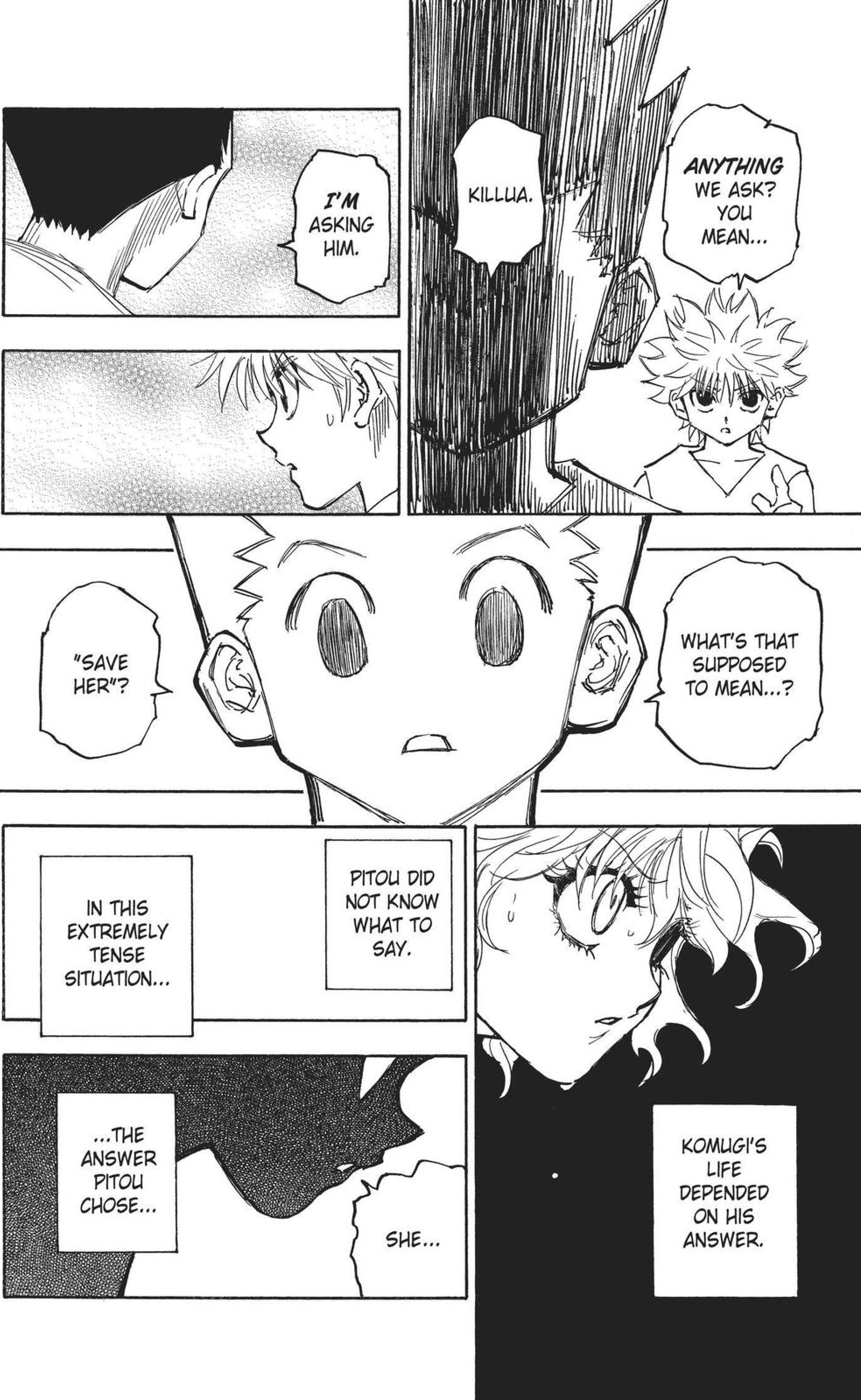

YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!!!
WHY THE HELL SHOULD I WAIT?!
GET UP!!!
STEP OUTSIDE!!!
WITH PITOU'S UNEXPECTED SUBMISSION, GON DID NOT KNOW WHERE TO DIRECT HIS ANGER.
BUT...
KILLUA WAS STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS GOING ON.

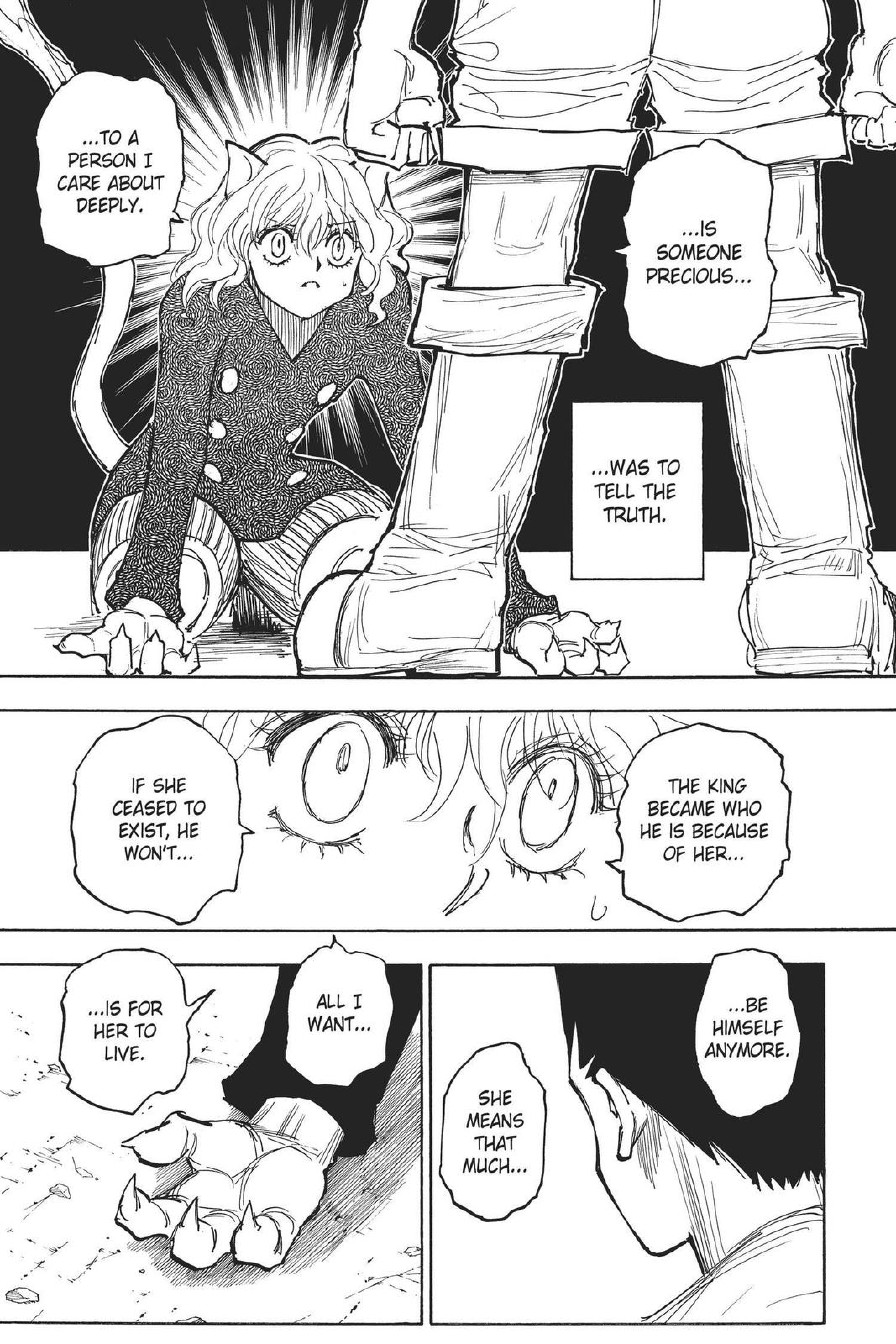

I KNOW NOTHING BESIDES THE MISSION.
HE MEANT ...
...THERE WAS SOMETHING UNEXPECTED!!
GRANDPA DID A BLIND DROP OF THE DRAGONS...!!
HIS JOB WAS PROBABLY TO USE...
...DRAGON DIVE AND DRAGON HEAD TO SEPARATE THE KING FROM THE GUARDS.
HE DIDN'T KNOW *SHE* WAS HERE.
THIS WOMAN IS THE ONE...
...WHOSE EXISTENCE NONE OF US PREDICTED!!
SHE'S (AGAIN, PROBABLY) THE REASON THE KING HURT HIMSELF!!
AND WHY DID HE EXHIBIT SUCH BIZARRE BEHAVIOR?!
IT'S BECAUSE ...
...SHE MEANS SOMETHING SPECIAL TO HIM.
SHE'S ...
...NOT BEING HARMED RIGHT NOW.

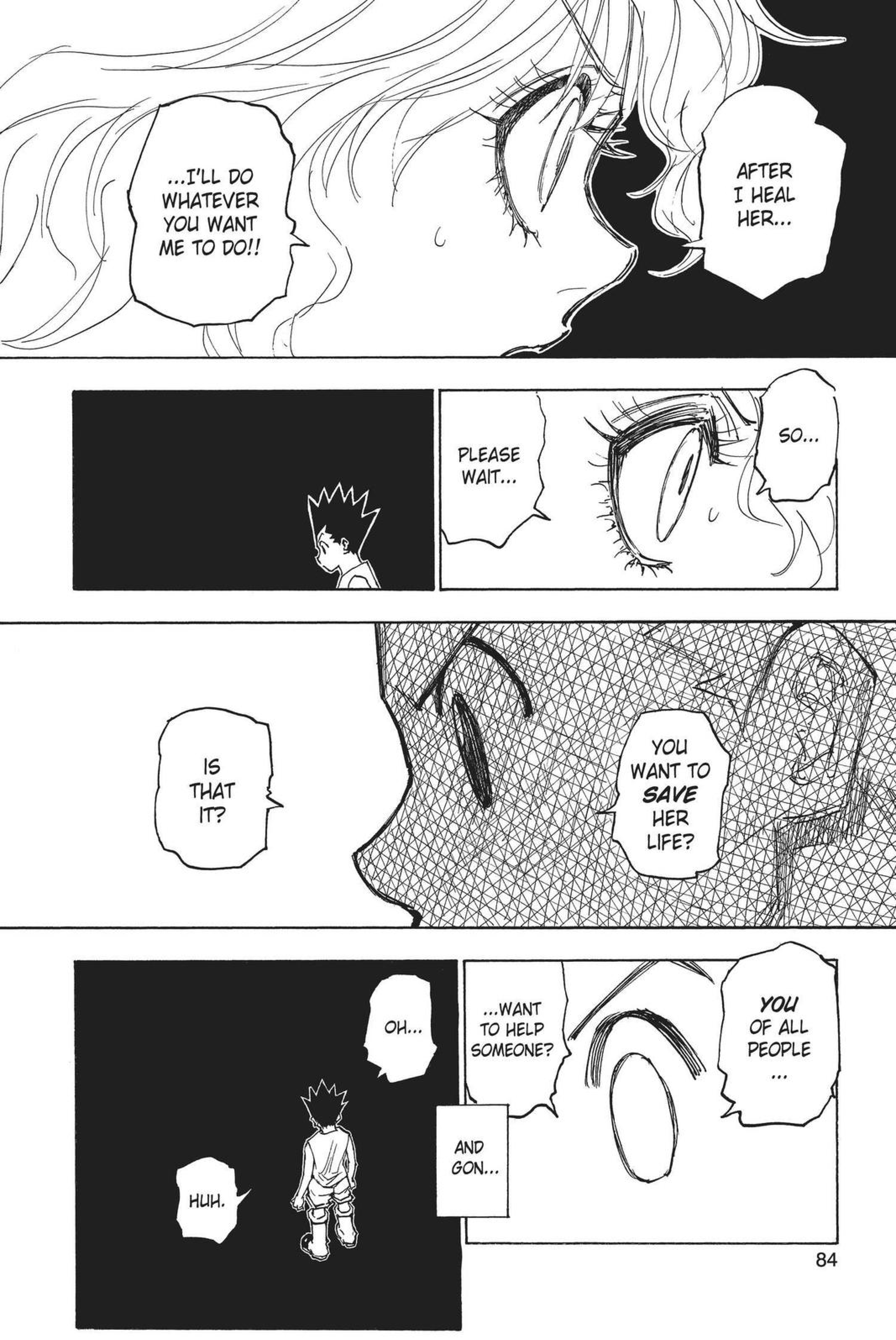

SHE'S BEING HEALED...
...ON THE KING'S ORDERS!!!
PITOU'S HEALING ABILITY DOESN'T JUST PRECLUDE EN.
KILLUA WAS PAINFULLY AWARE THAT ALL THIS WOULD...
HE HAS TO FOCUS **ALL** HIS AURA TO USE IT!!
...ONLY HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON GON.
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?!
WHAT SHOULD I SAY...?!

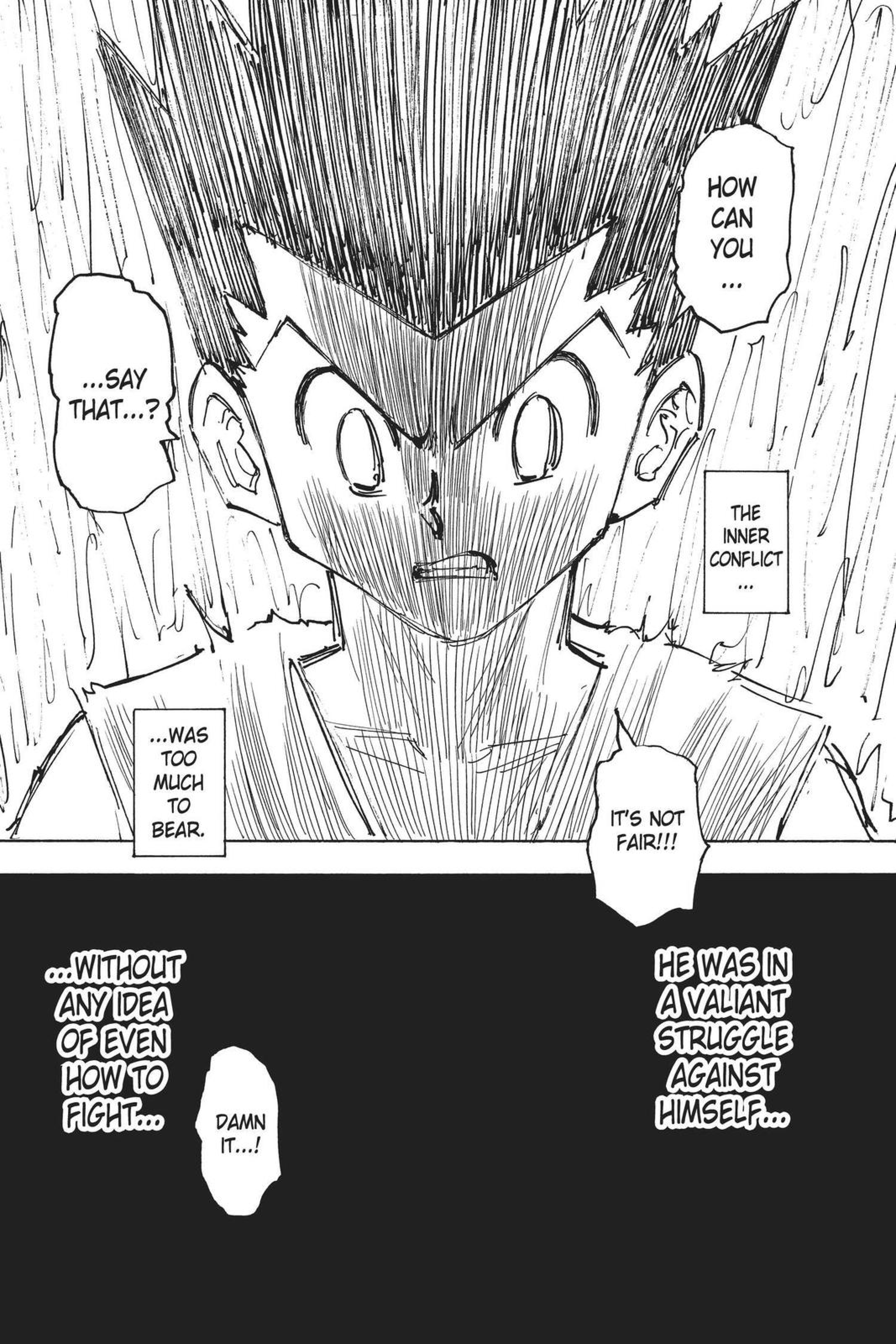

SHF
SHF
GON...
I BEG YOU!!
I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK!!
SO PLEASE WAIT.
I...


I HAVE TO SAVE HER...
...AT ANY COST!!
"SAVE" ...?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?

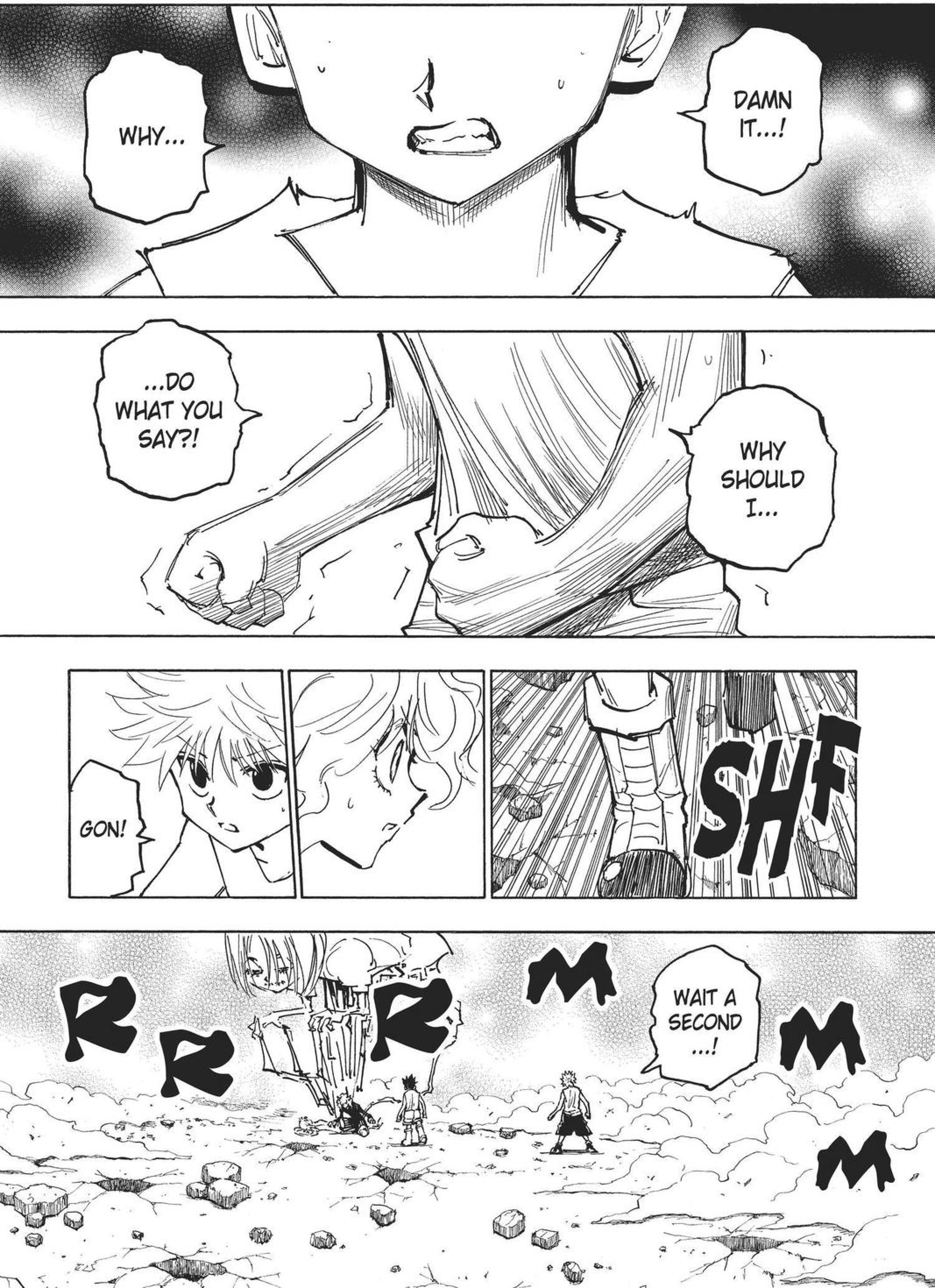

ANYTHING WE ASK? YOU MEAN...
KILLUA.
I'M ASKING HIM.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN...?
"SAVE HER"?
PITOU DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
IN THIS EXTREMELY TENSE SITUATION...
KOMUGI'S LIFE DEPENDED ON HIS ANSWER.
SHE...
...THE ANSWER PITOU CHOSE...

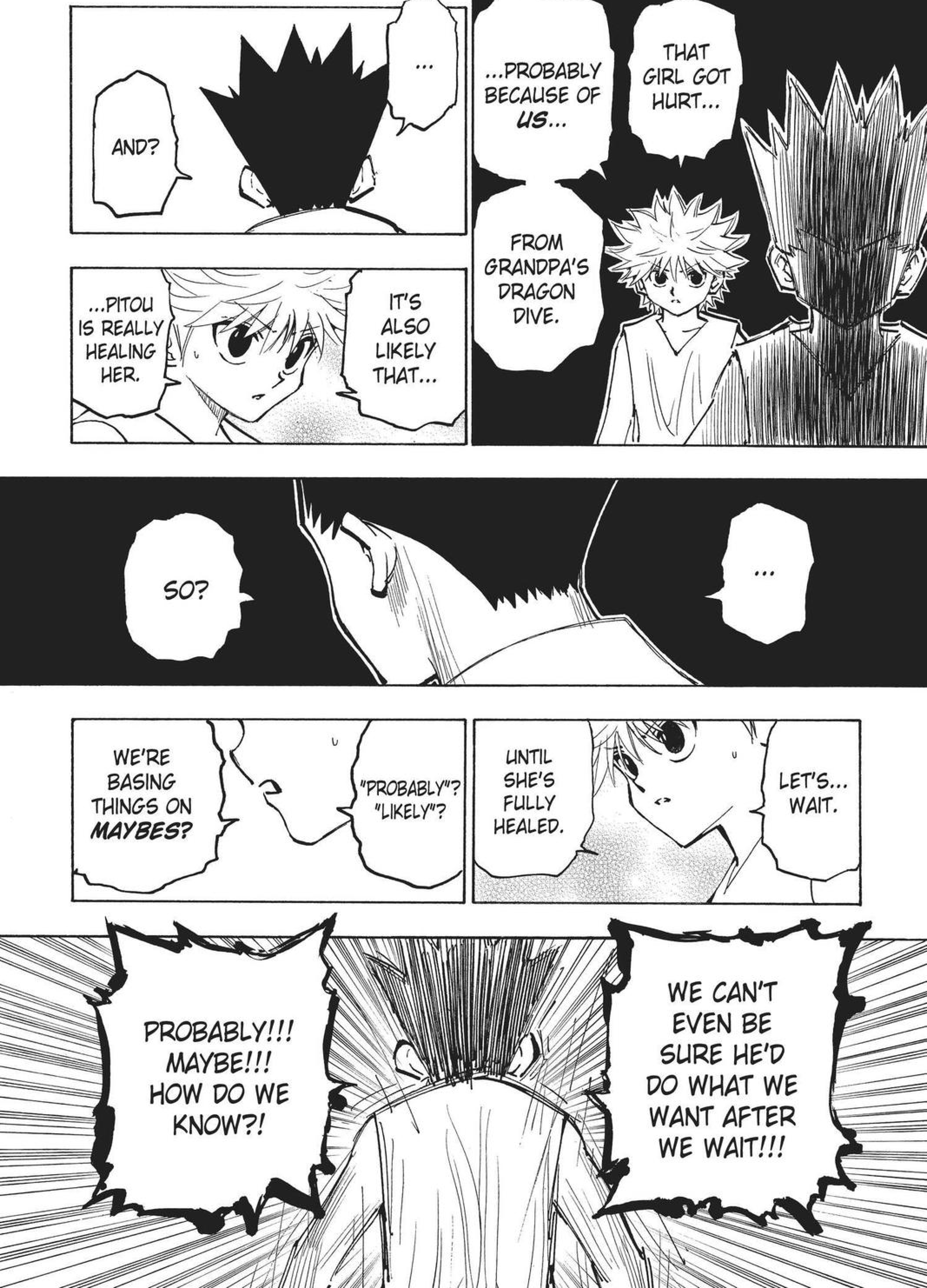

...IS SOMEONE PRECIOUS...
...WAS TO TELL THE TRUTH.
...TO A PERSON I CARE ABOUT DEEPLY.
THE KING BECAME WHO HE IS BECAUSE OF HER...
IF SHE CEASED TO EXIST, HE WON'T...
...BE HIMSELF ANYMORE.
SHE MEANS THAT MUCH...
ALL I WANT...
...IS FOR HER TO LIVE.

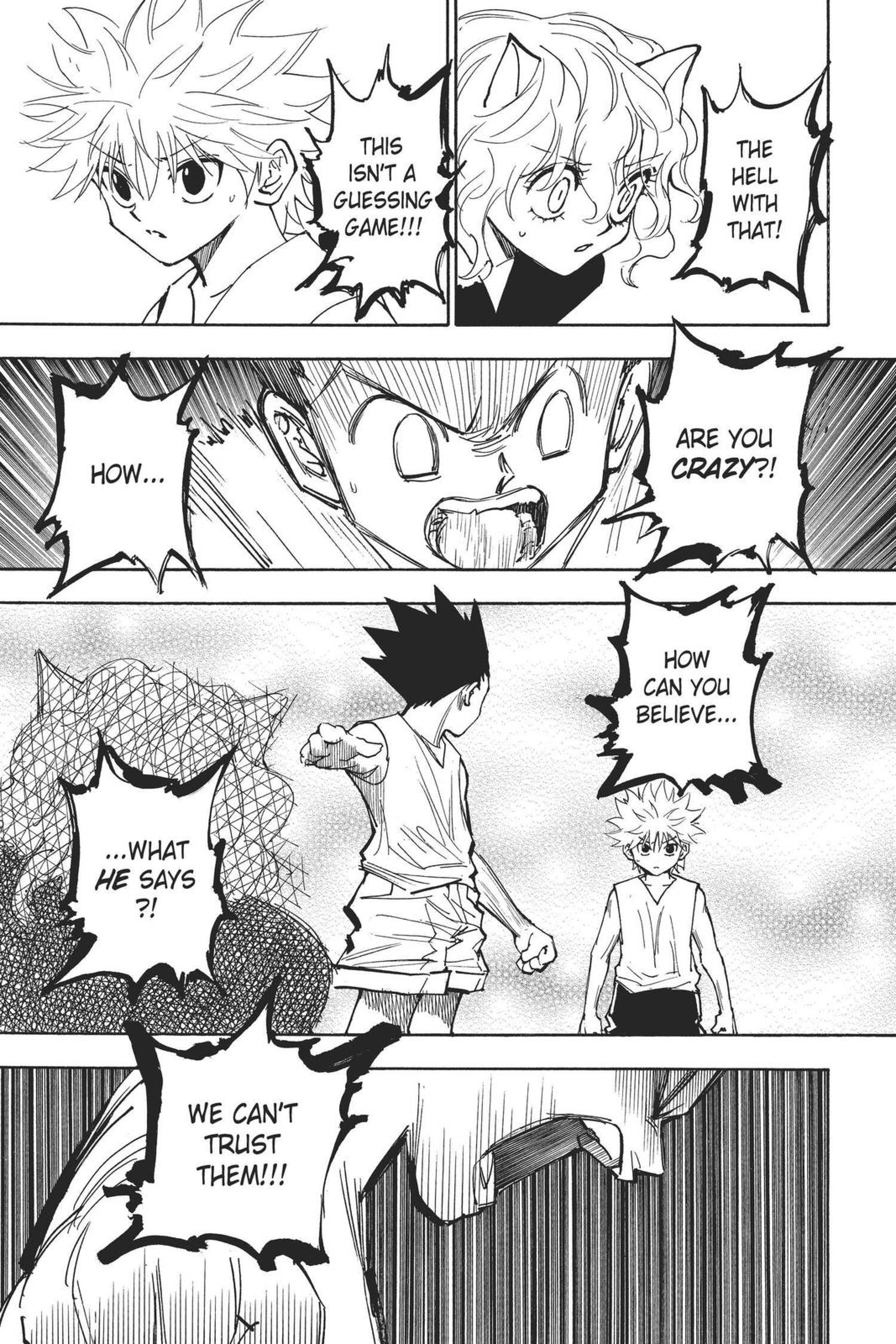

AFTER I HEAL HER...
...I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT ME TO DO!!
SO...
PLEASE WAIT...
YOU WANT TO **SAVE** HER LIFE?
IS THAT IT?
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE ...
...WANT TO HELP SOMEONE?
AND GON...
OH...
HUH.

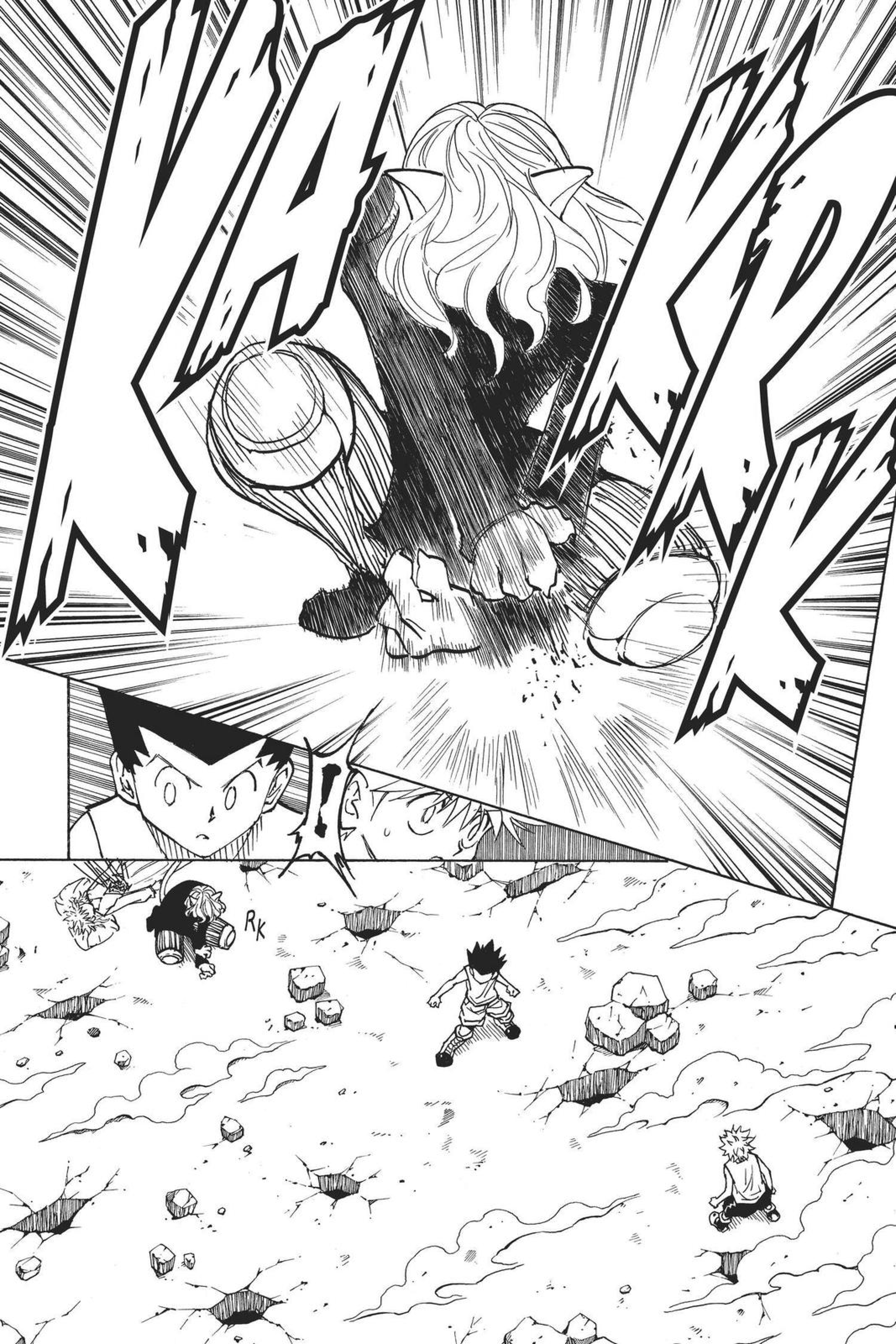

HOW CAN YOU ...
...SAY THAT...?
THE INNER CONFLICT ...
...WAS TOO MUCH TO BEAR.
IT'S NOT FAIR!!!
HE WAS IN A VALIANT STRUGGLE AGAINST HIMSELF...
DAMN IT...!
...WITHOUT ANY IDEA OF EVEN HOW TO FIGHT...

Chapter 275: Promise

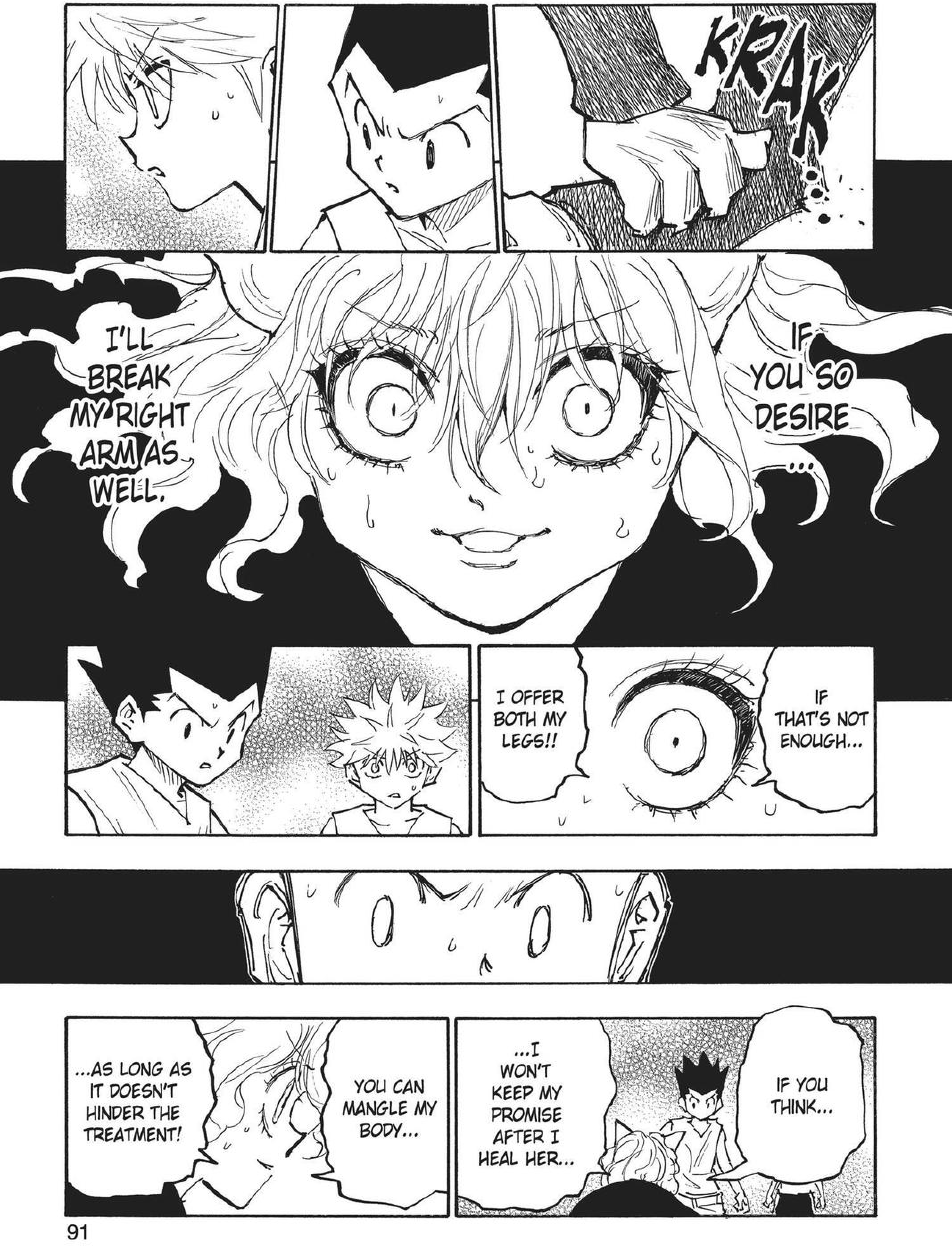

DAMN IT...!
WHY...
WHY SHOULD I...
...DO WHAT YOU SAY?!
SHF
GON!
WAIT A SECOND ...!
RRRMMMM

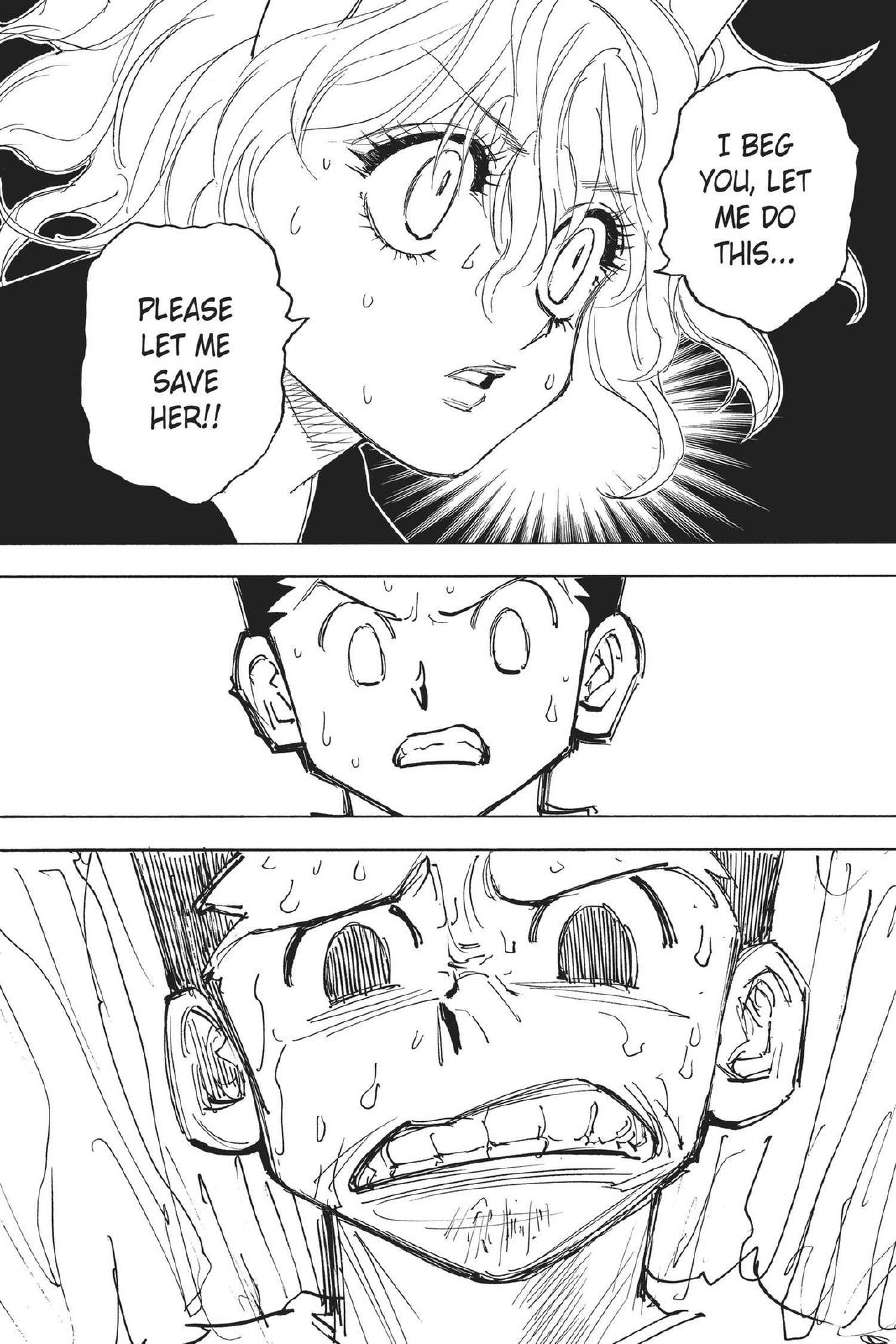

THAT GIRL GOT HURT...
...PROBABLY BECAUSE OF *US*...
FROM GRANDPA'S DRAGON DIVE.
...
AND?
IT'S ALSO LIKELY THAT...
...PITOU IS REALLY HEALING HER.
...
SO?
LET'S... WAIT.
UNTIL SHE'S FULLY HEALED.
"PROBABLY"? "LIKELY"?
WE'RE BASING THINGS ON *MAYBES?*
WE CAN'T EVEN BE SURE HE'D DO WHAT WE WANT AFTER WE WAIT!!!
PROBABLY!!! MAYBE!!! HOW DO WE KNOW?!

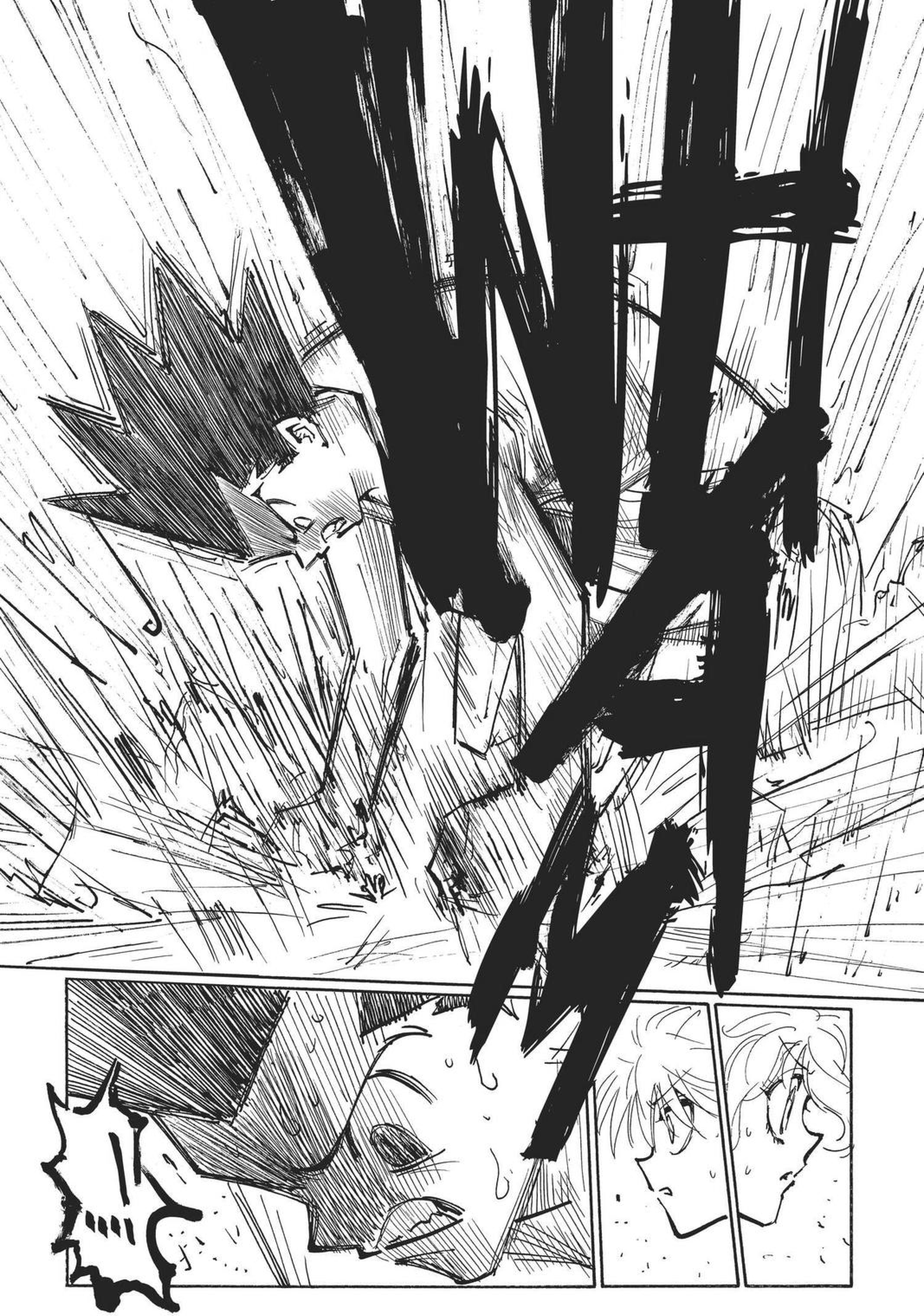

THE HELL WITH THAT!
THIS ISN'T A GUESSING GAME!!!
ARE YOU *CRAZY*?!
HOW...
HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE...
...WHAT *HE* SAYS ?!
WE CAN'T TRUST THEM!!!

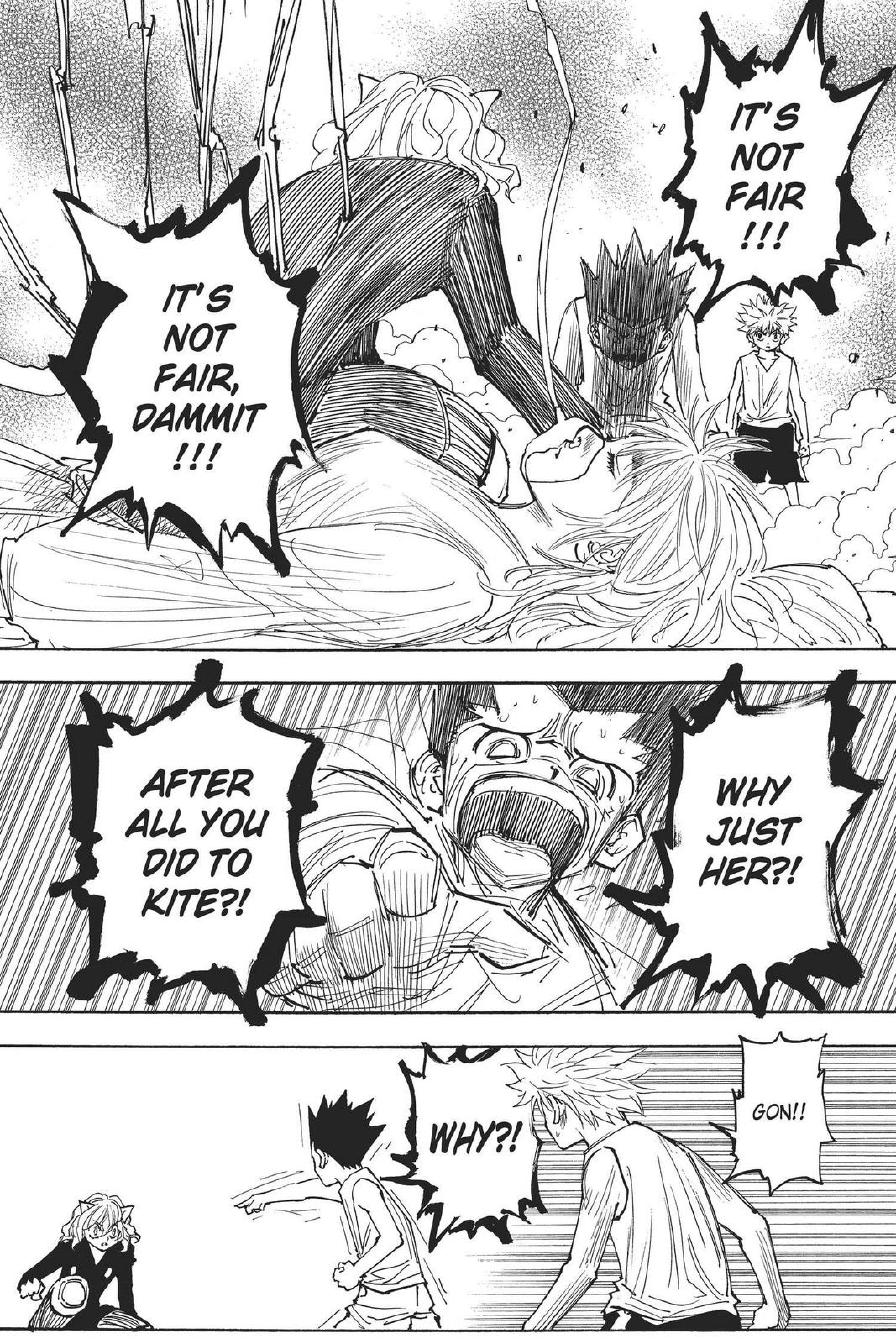

KAKRK
!
RK

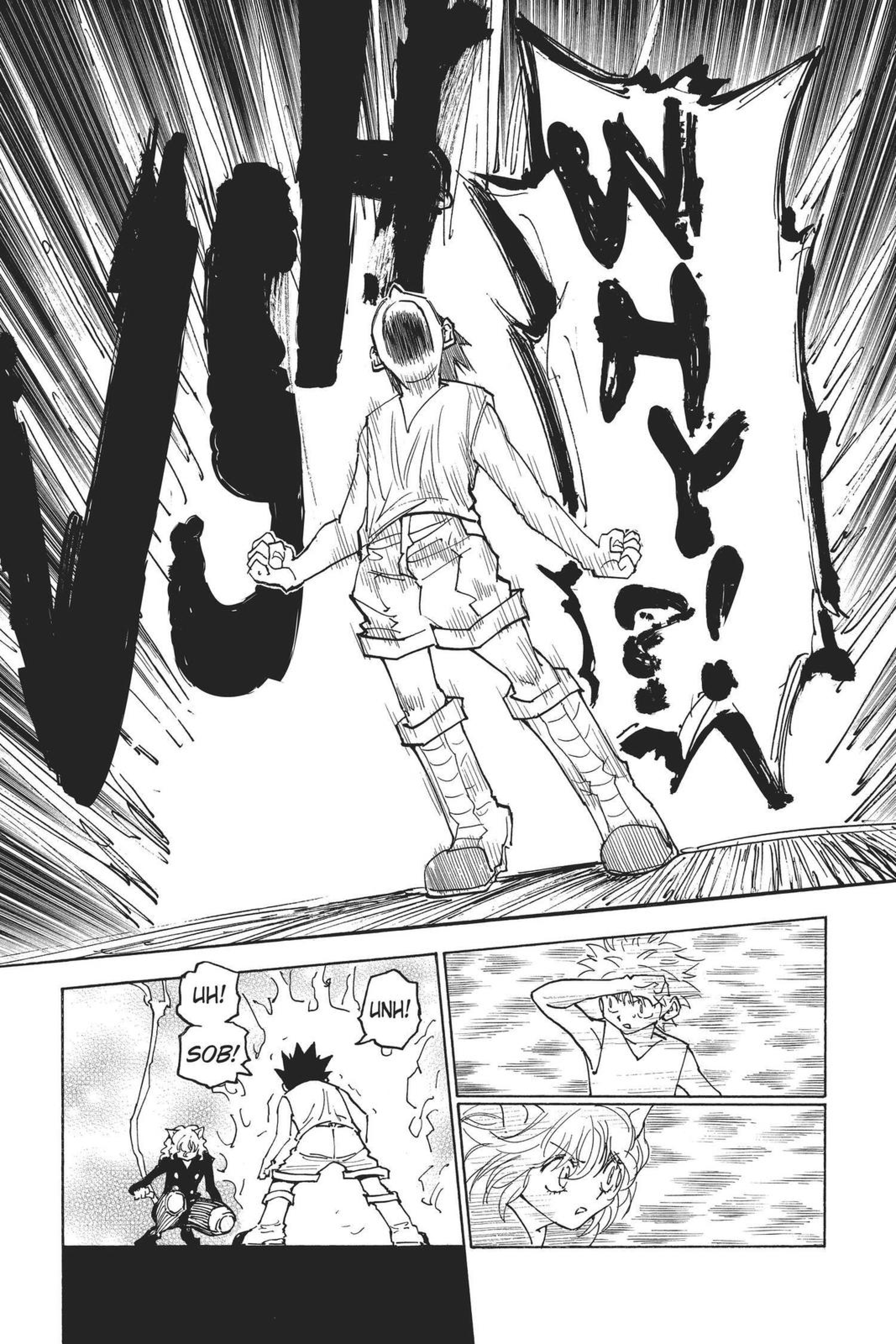
READ THIS WAY

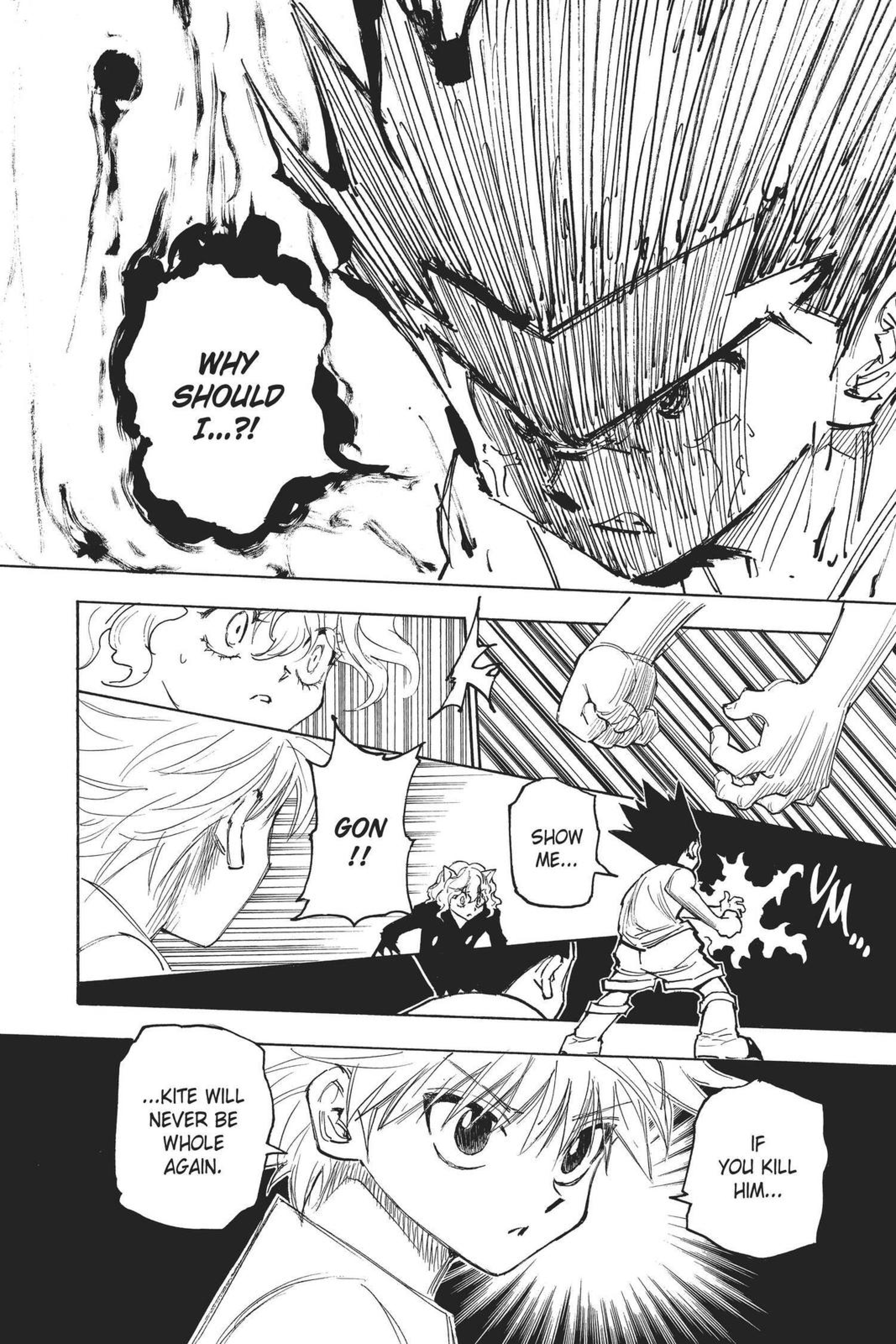

KRAK
IF YOU SO DESIRE...
I'LL BREAK MY RIGHT ARM AS WELL.
IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH...
I OFFER BOTH MY LEGS!!
IF YOU THINK...
...I WON'T KEEP MY PROMISE AFTER I HEAL HER...
YOU CAN MANGLE MY BODY...
...AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T HINDER THE TREATMENT!


I BEG YOU, LET ME DO THIS...
PLEASE LET ME SAVE HER!!

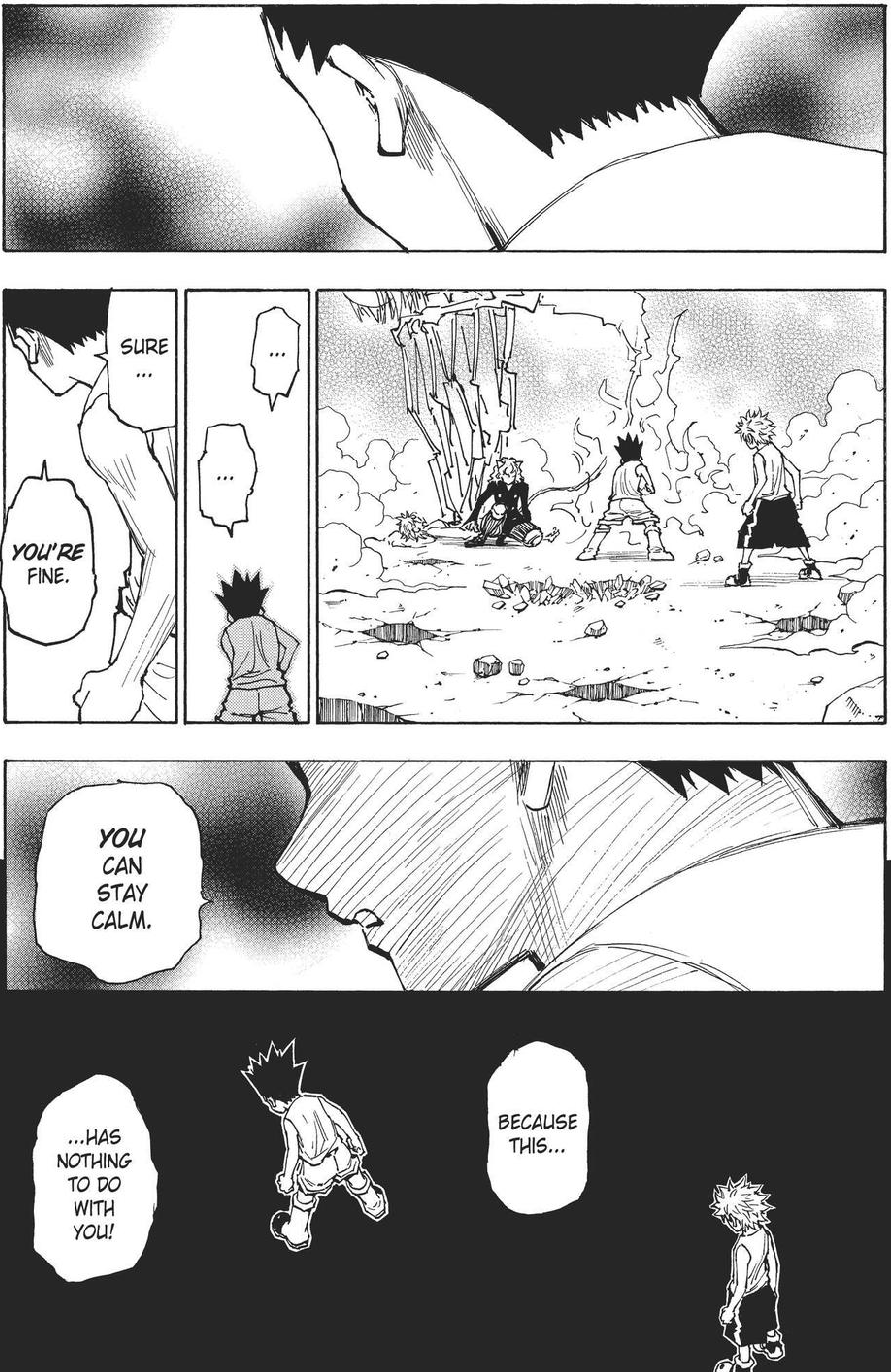


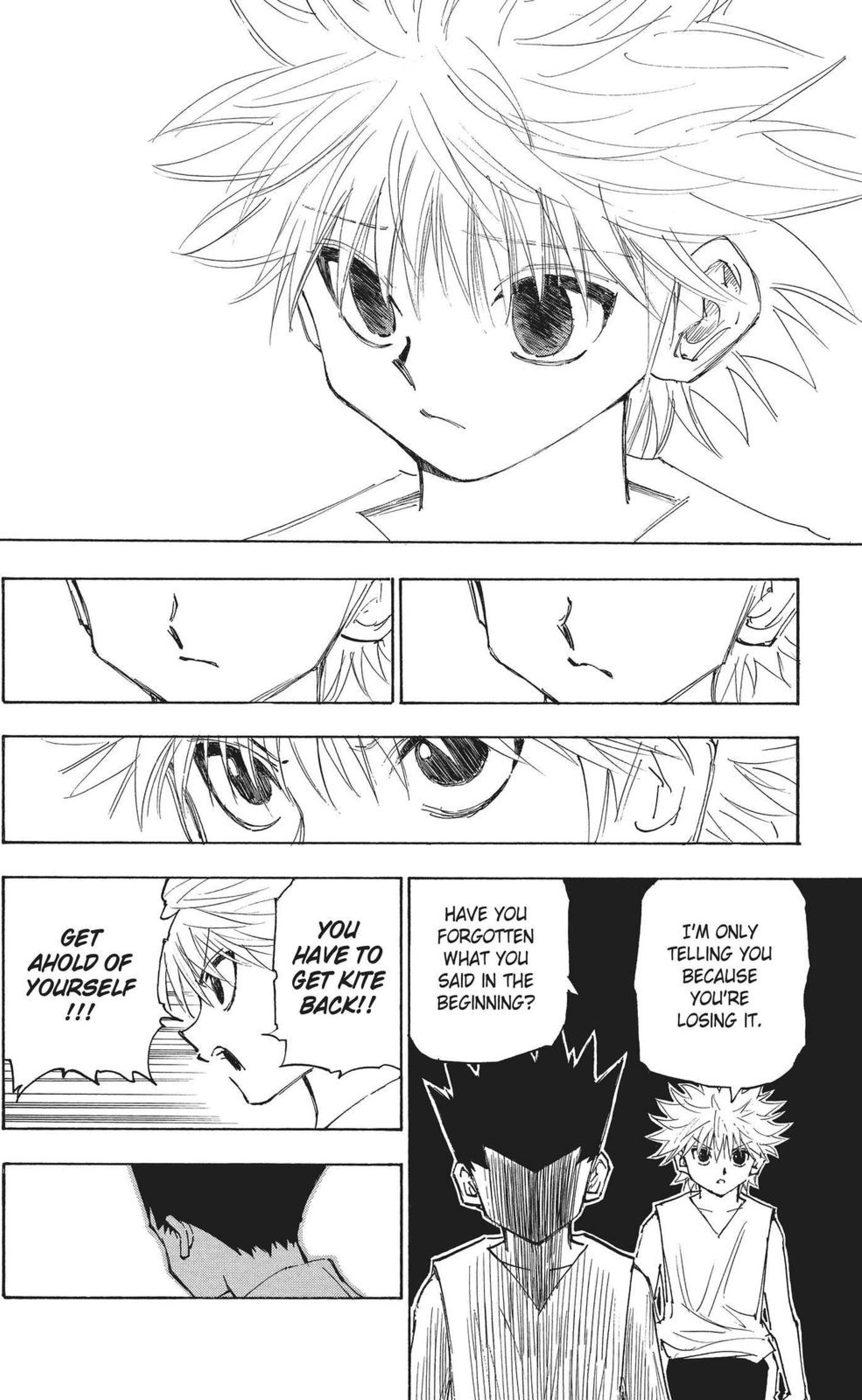

IT'S NOT FAIR!!!
IT'S NOT FAIR, DAMMIT!!!
WHY JUST HER?!
AFTER ALL YOU DID TO KITE?!
GON!!
WHY?!

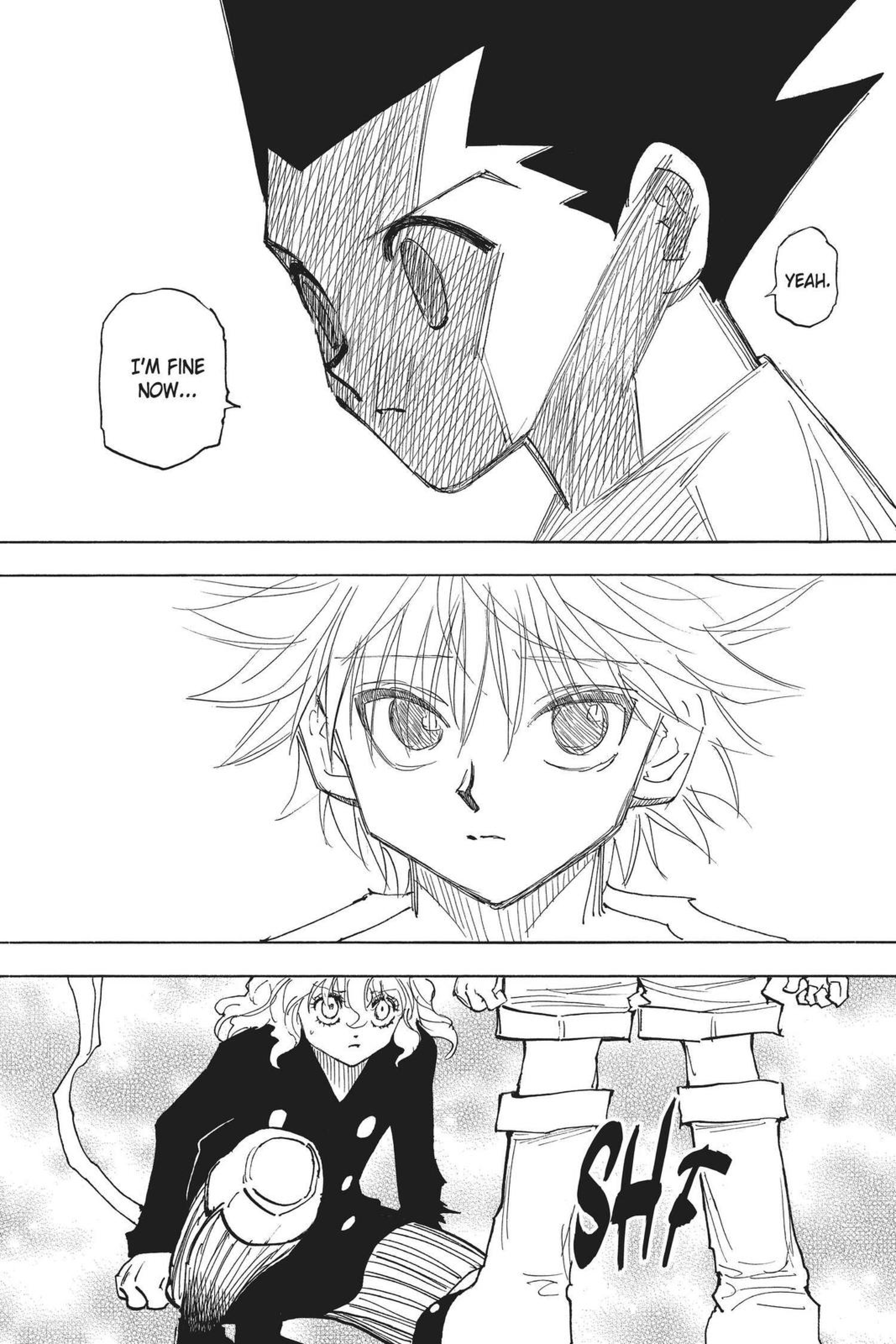

WHY!?
UH!
UNH!
UH!
SOB!

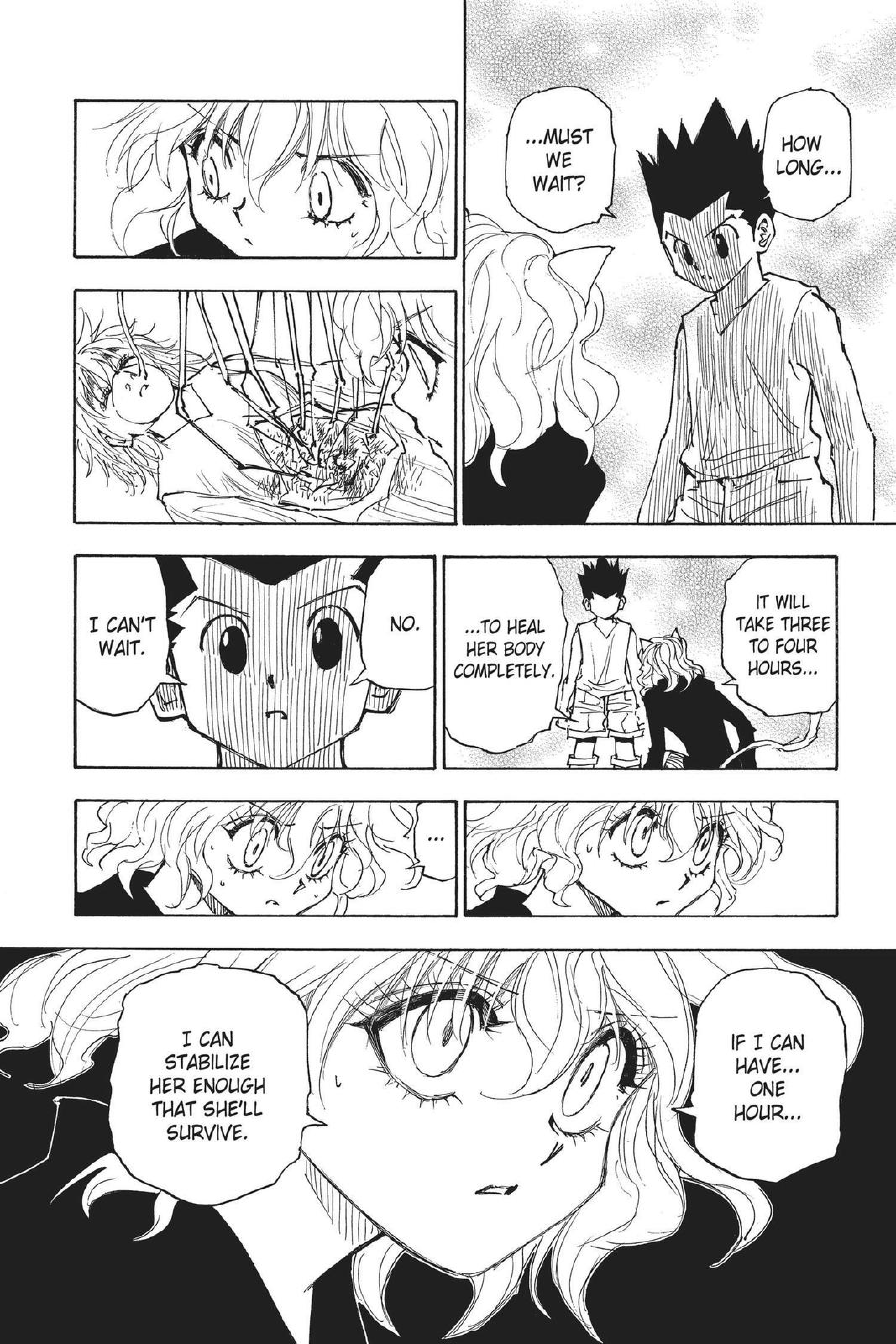

WHY SHOULD I...?!
VM...
SHOW ME...
GON !!
IF YOU KILL HIM...
...KITE WILL NEVER BE WHOLE AGAIN.

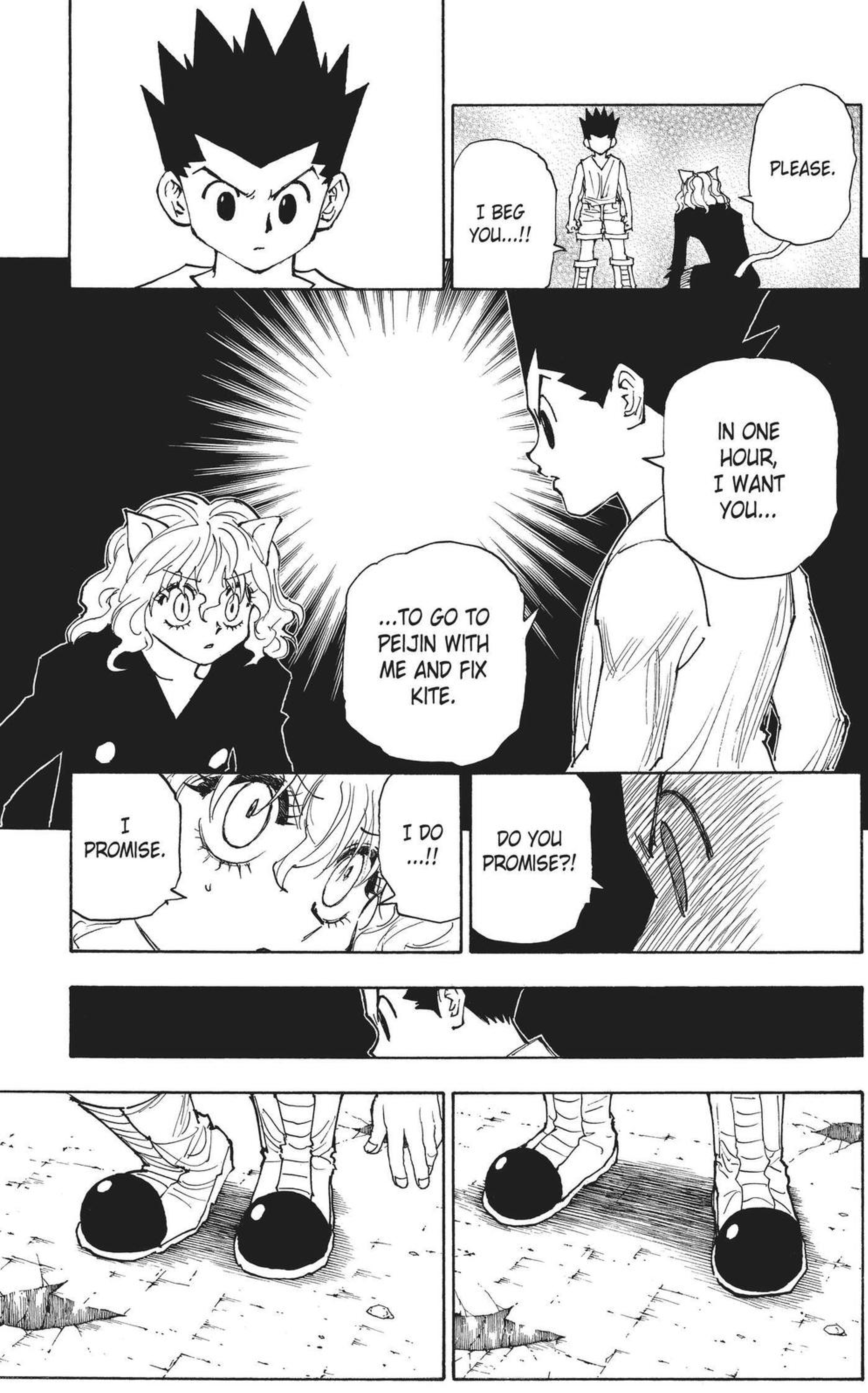
READ THIS WAY

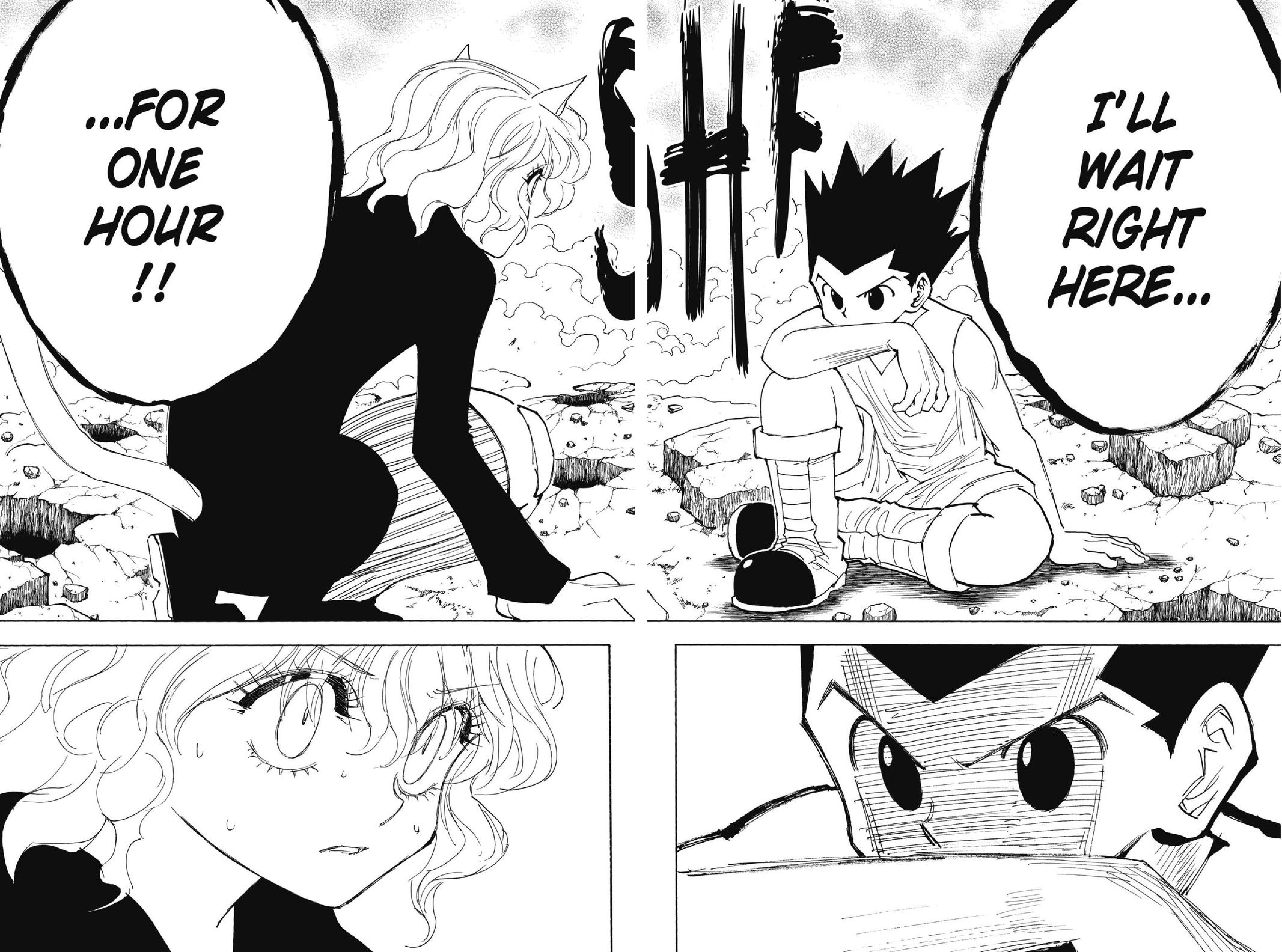

...
...
SURE ...
YOU'RE FINE.
YOU CAN STAY CALM.
BECAUSE THIS...
...HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!

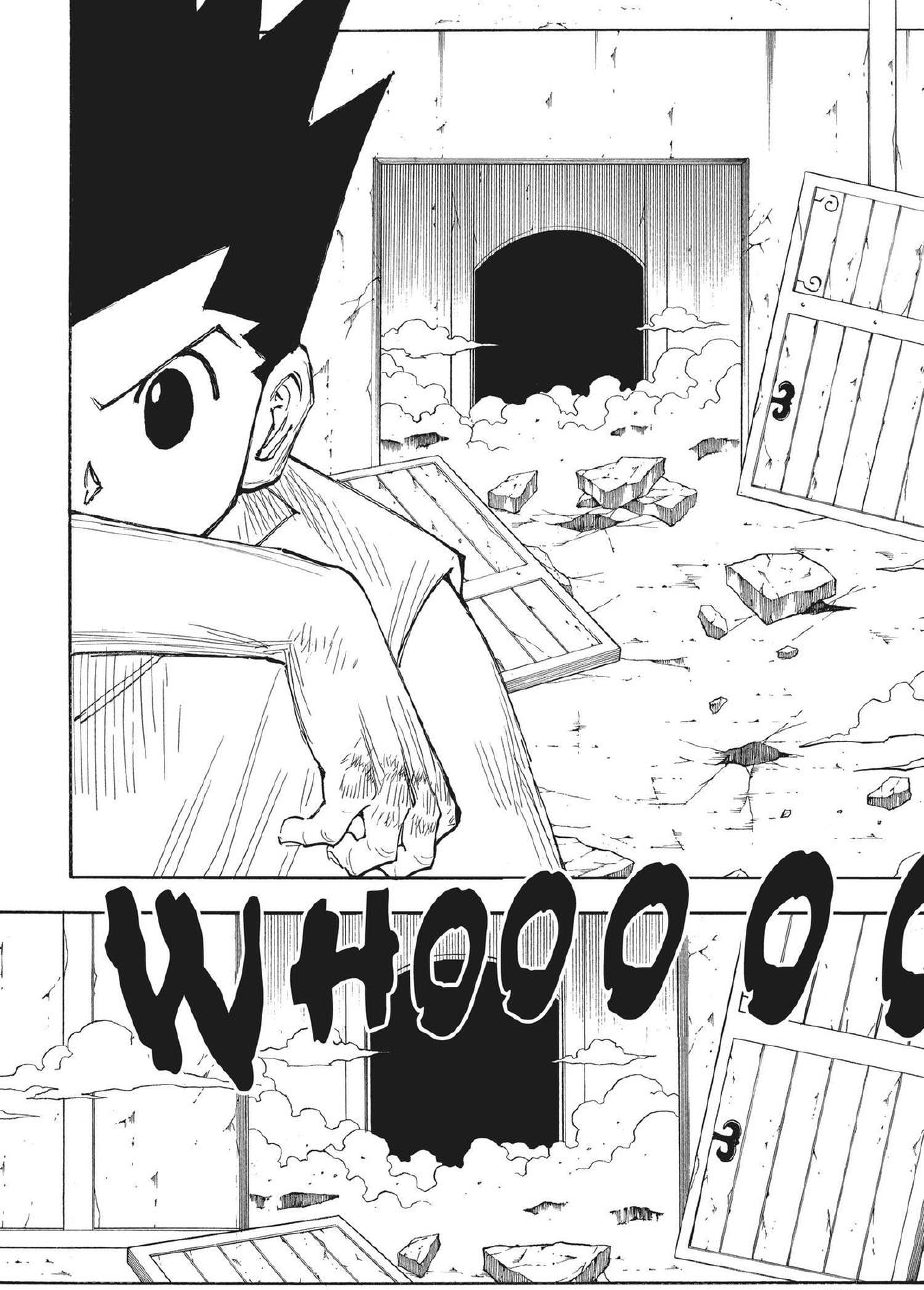

I'M ONLY TELLING YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE LOSING IT.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT YOU SAID IN THE BEGINNING?
YOU HAVE TO GET KITE BACK!!
GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF!!!


YEAH.
I'M FINE NOW...
SHF

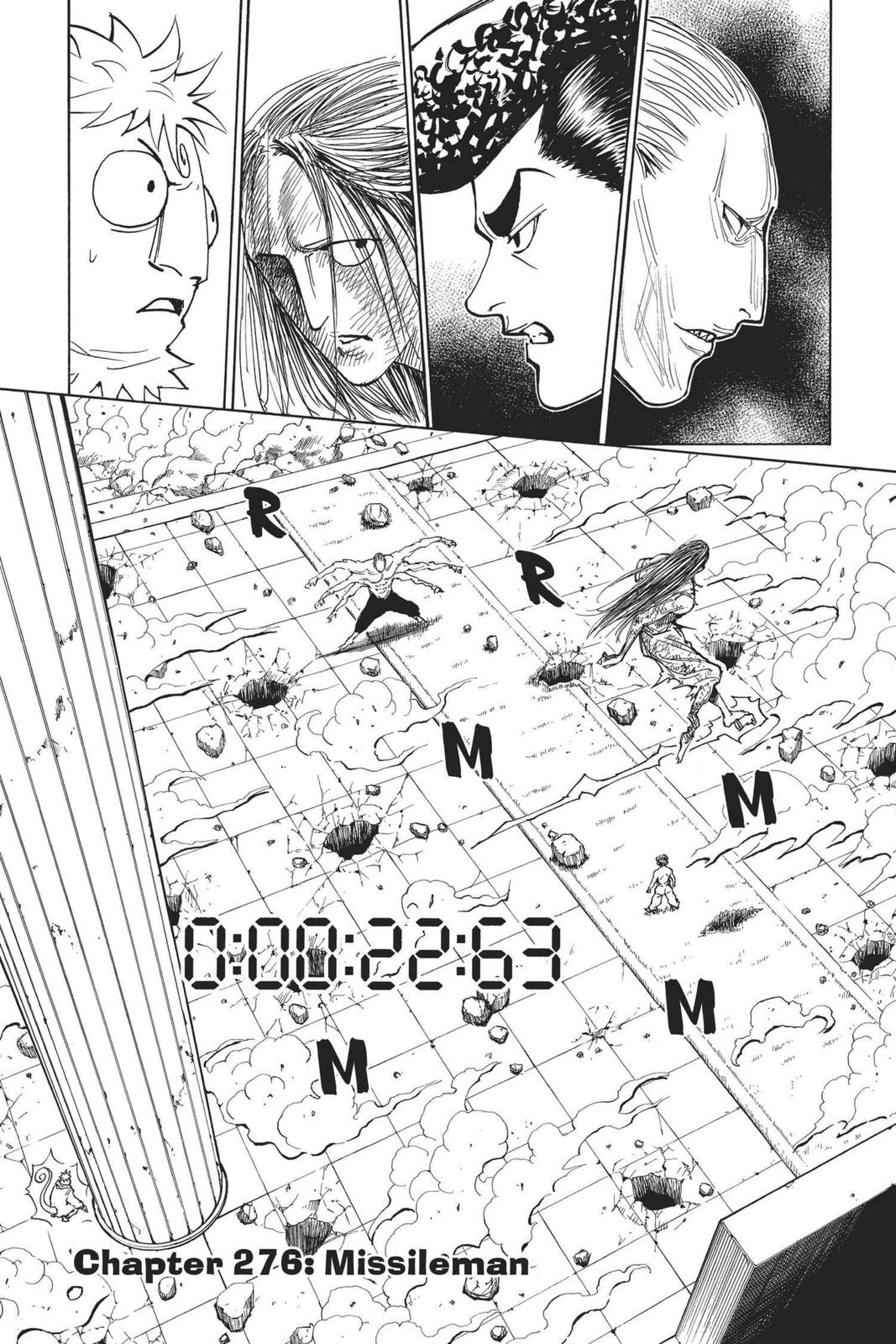

HOW LONG...
...MUST WE WAIT?
IT WILL TAKE THREE TO FOUR HOURS...
...TO HEAL HER BODY COMPLETELY.
NO.
I CAN'T WAIT.
...
IF I CAN HAVE... ONE HOUR...
I CAN STABILIZE HER ENOUGH THAT SHE'LL SURVIVE.

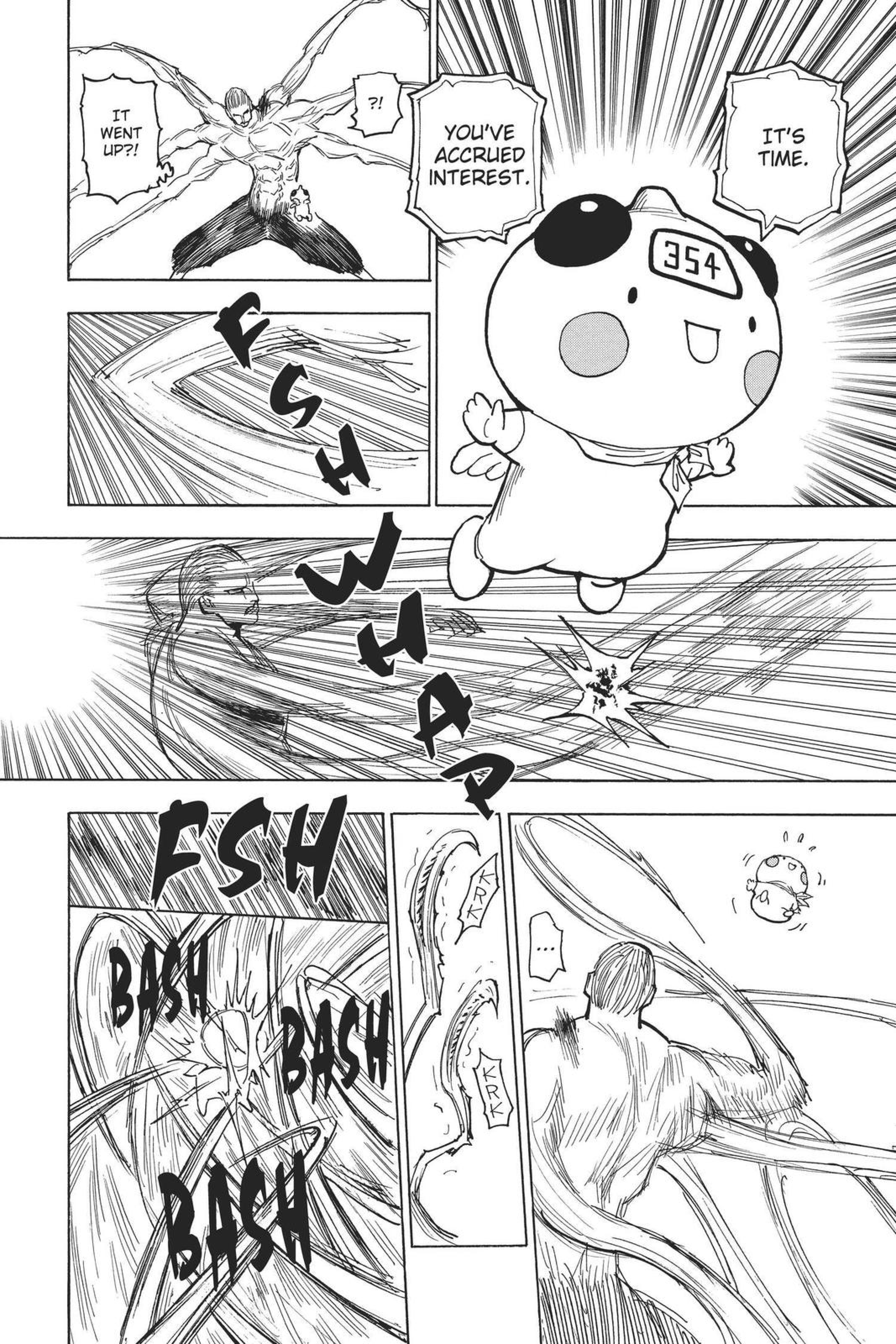

PLEASE.
I BEG YOU...!!
IN ONE HOUR, I WANT YOU...
...TO GO TO PEIJIN WITH ME AND FIX KITE.
DO YOU PROMISE?!
I DO ...!!
I PROMISE.

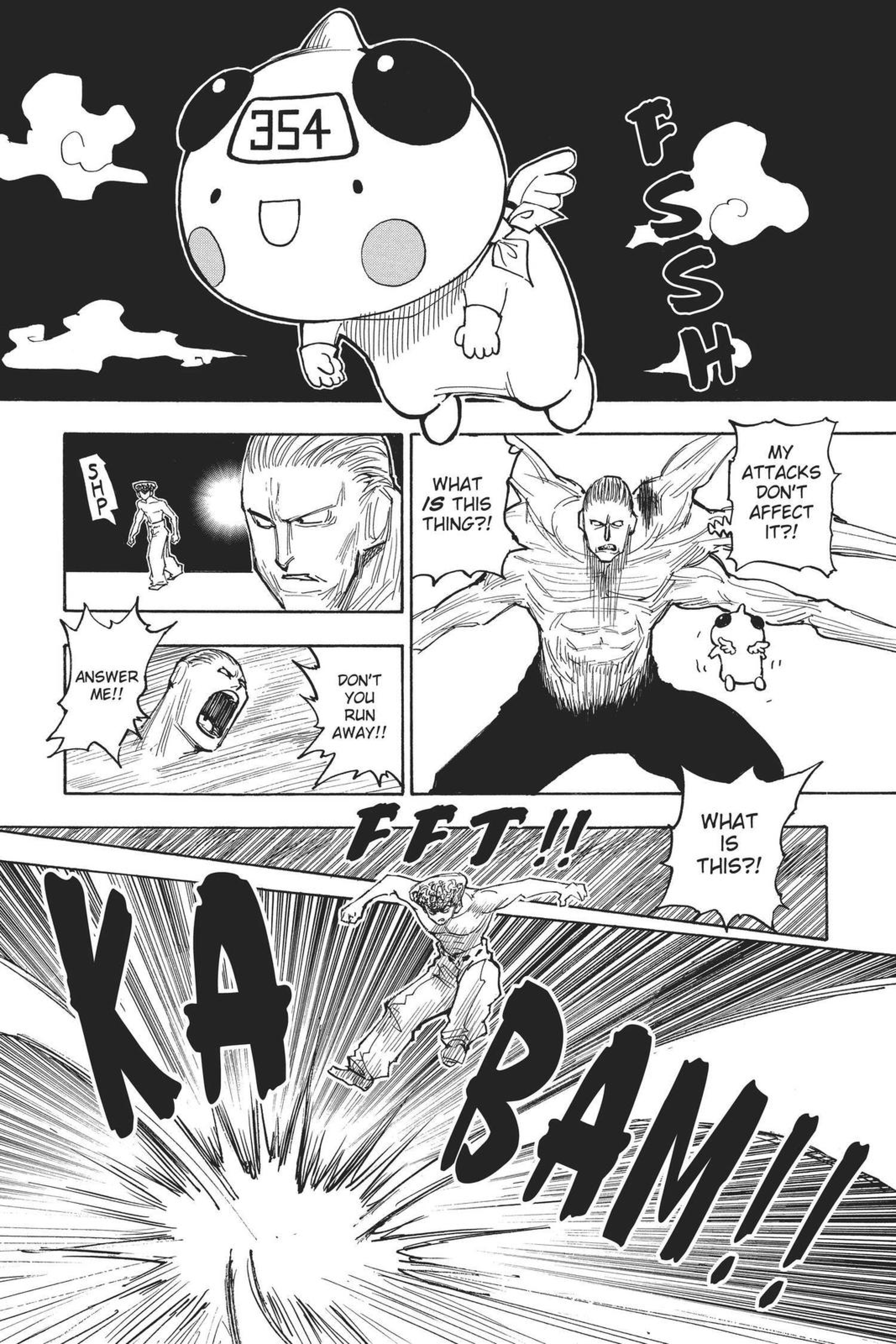

I'LL WAIT RIGHT HERE...
...FOR ONE HOUR!!

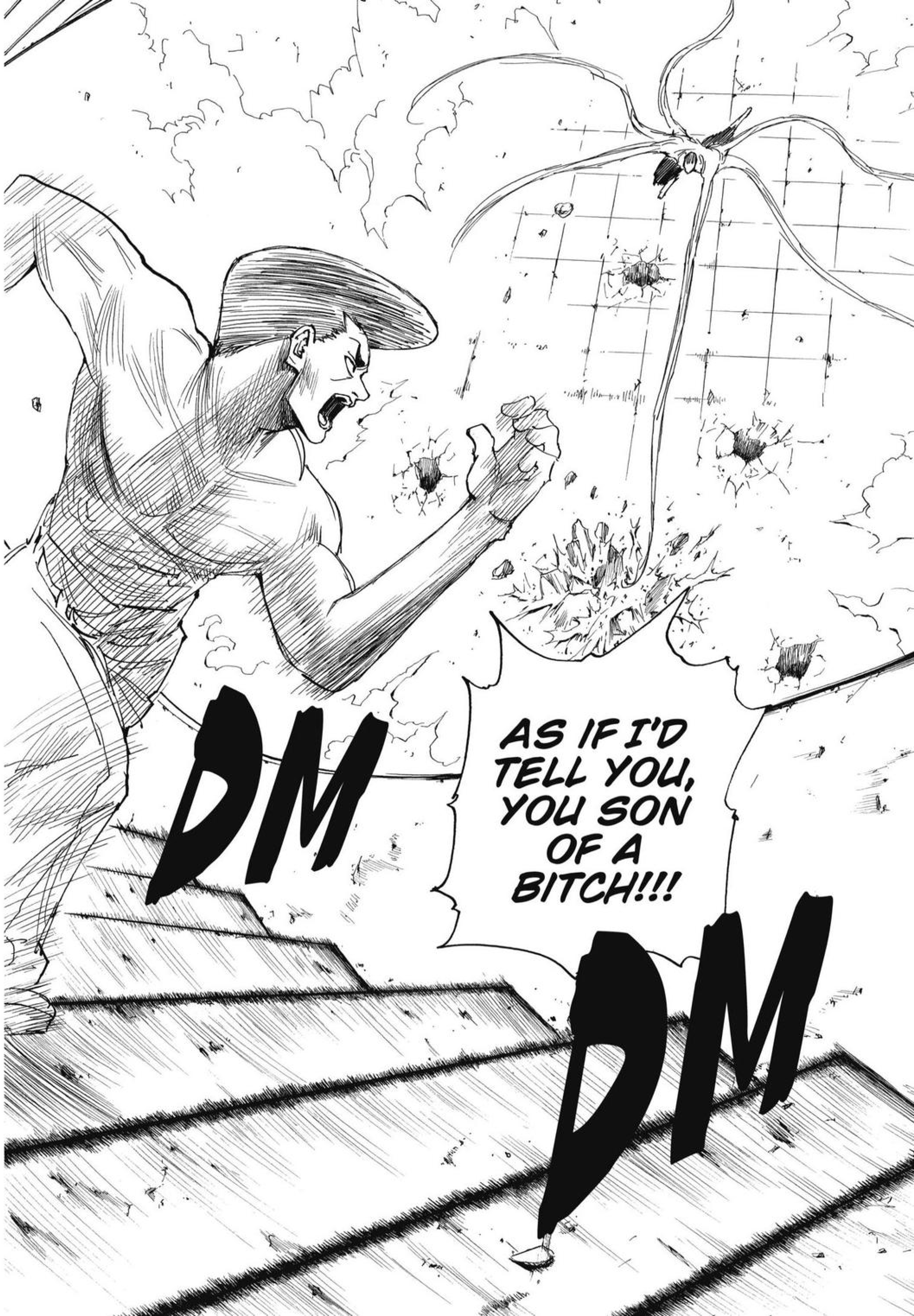

WHOOO O O

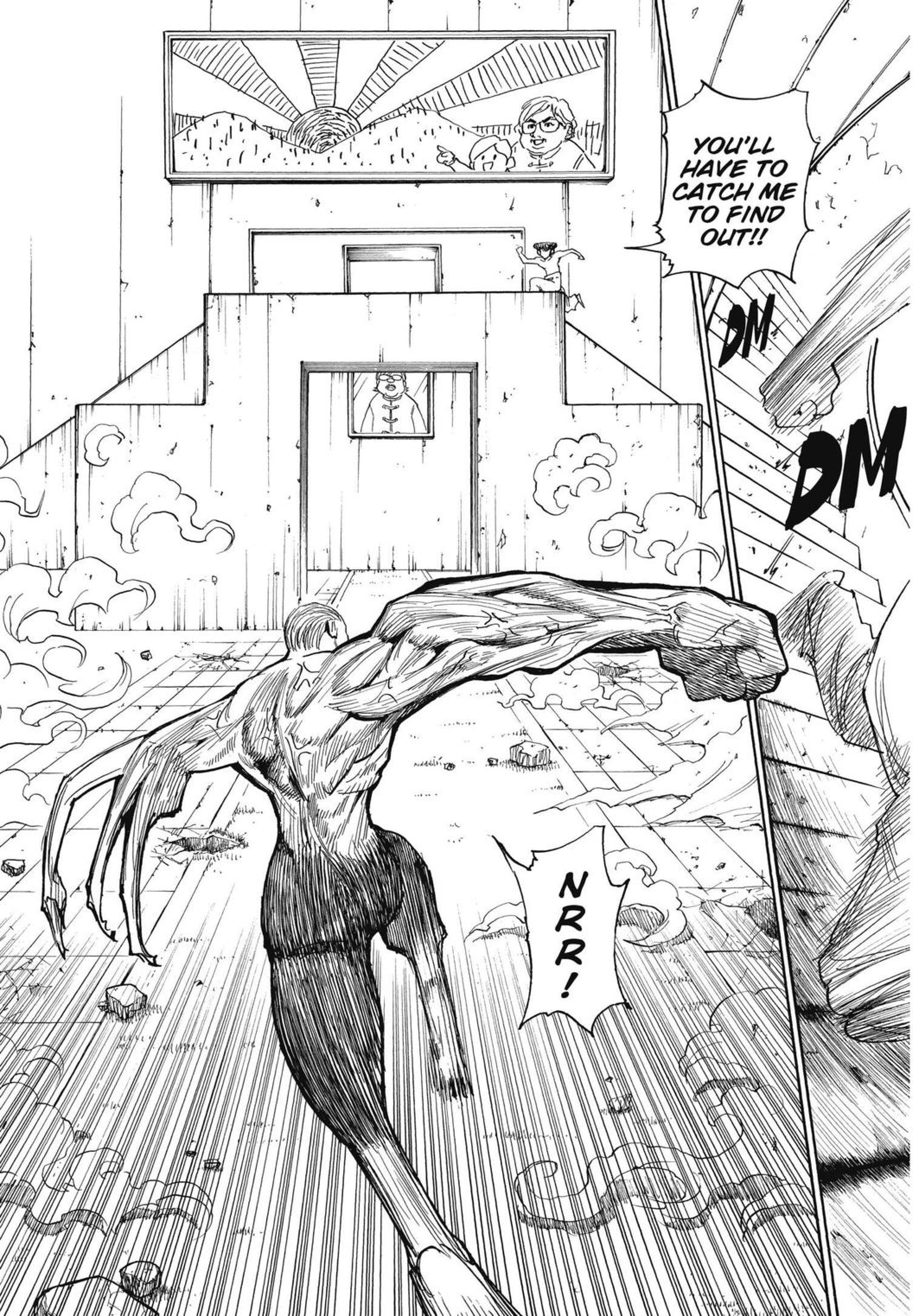
Chapter 276: Missileman

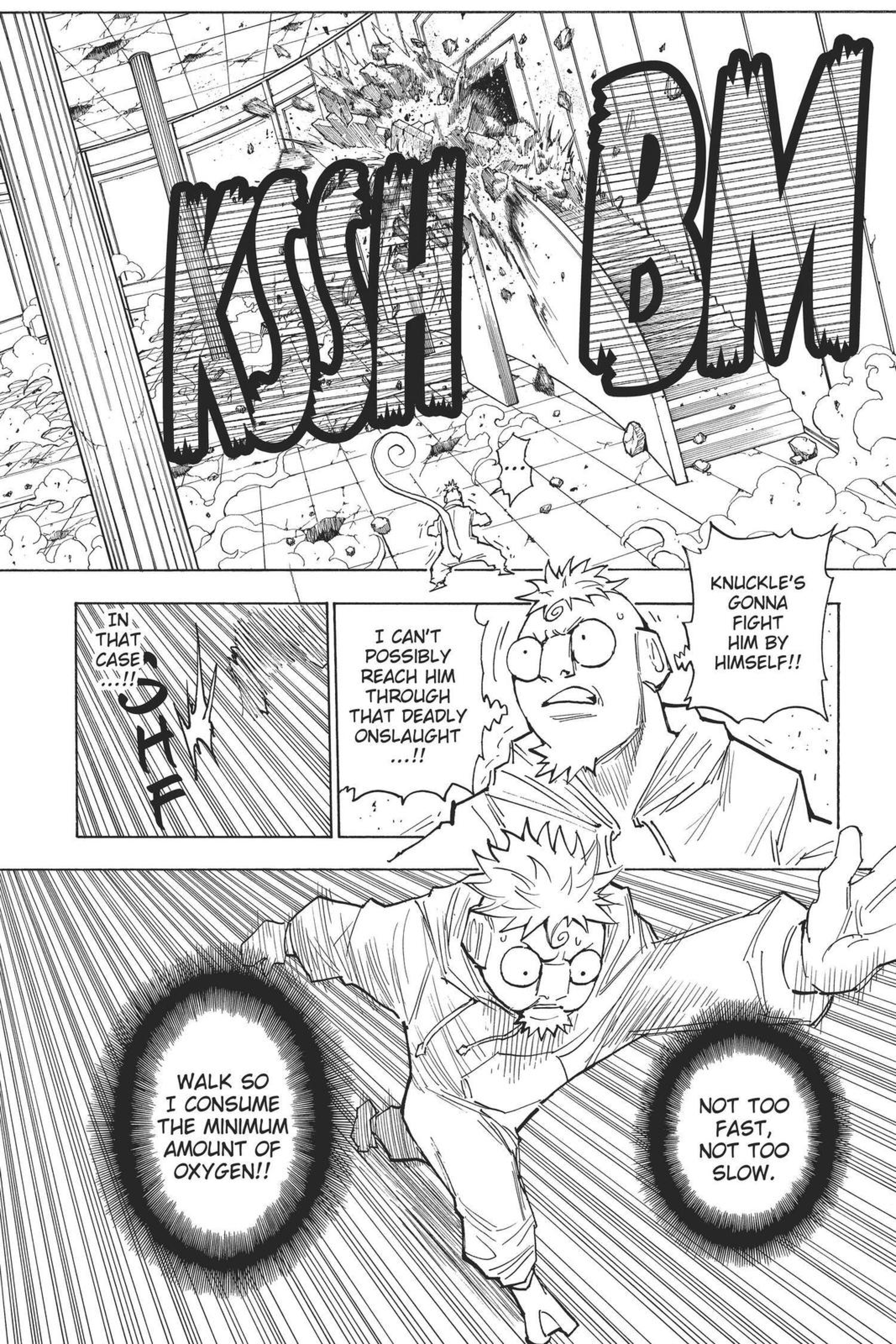

R
R
M
M
M
M
0:00:22:63

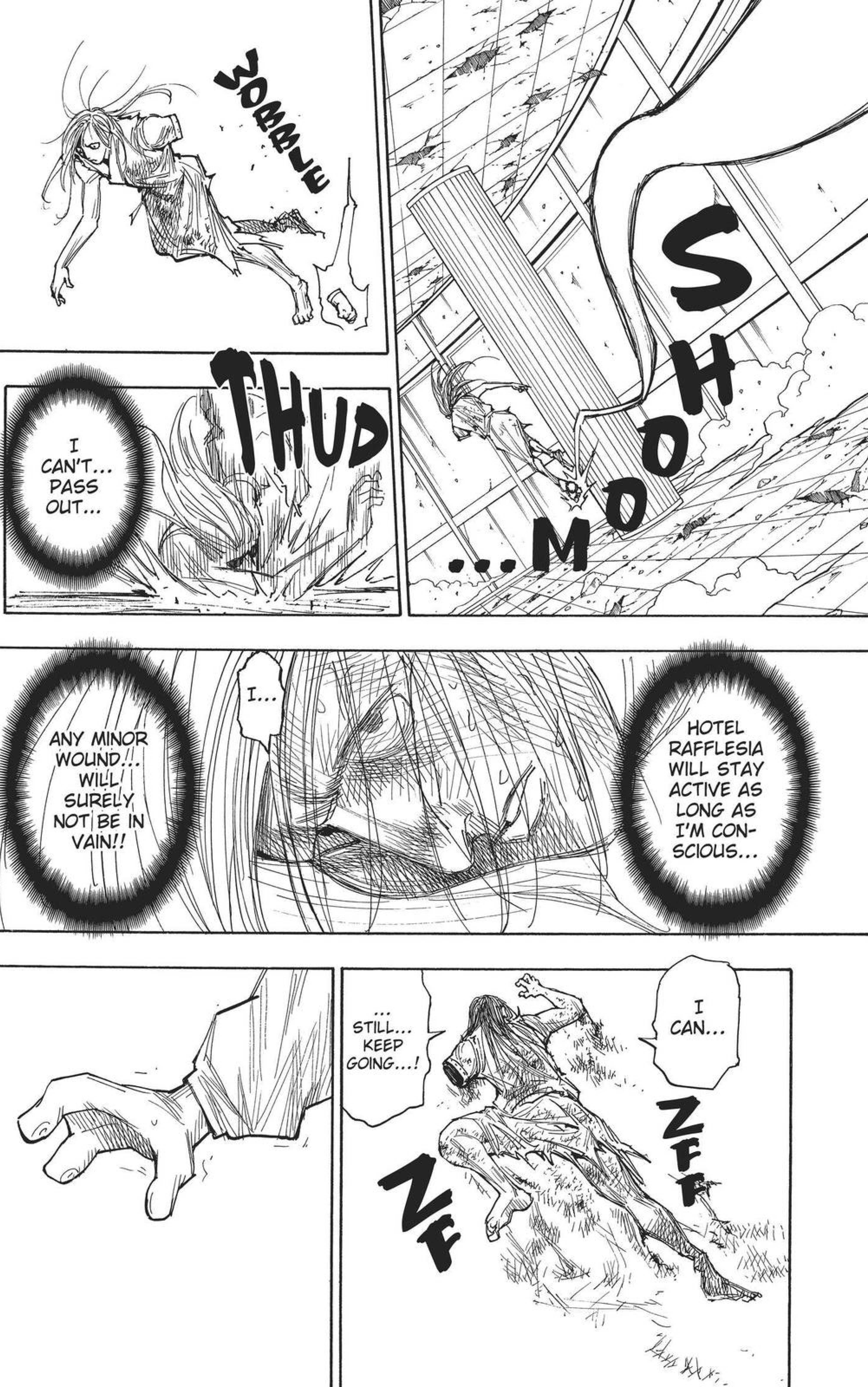

IT'S TIME.
YOU'VE ACCRUED INTEREST.
354
?!
IT WENT UP?!
FSH
WHAP
FSH
BASH
BASH
BASH
KRK
KRK
...

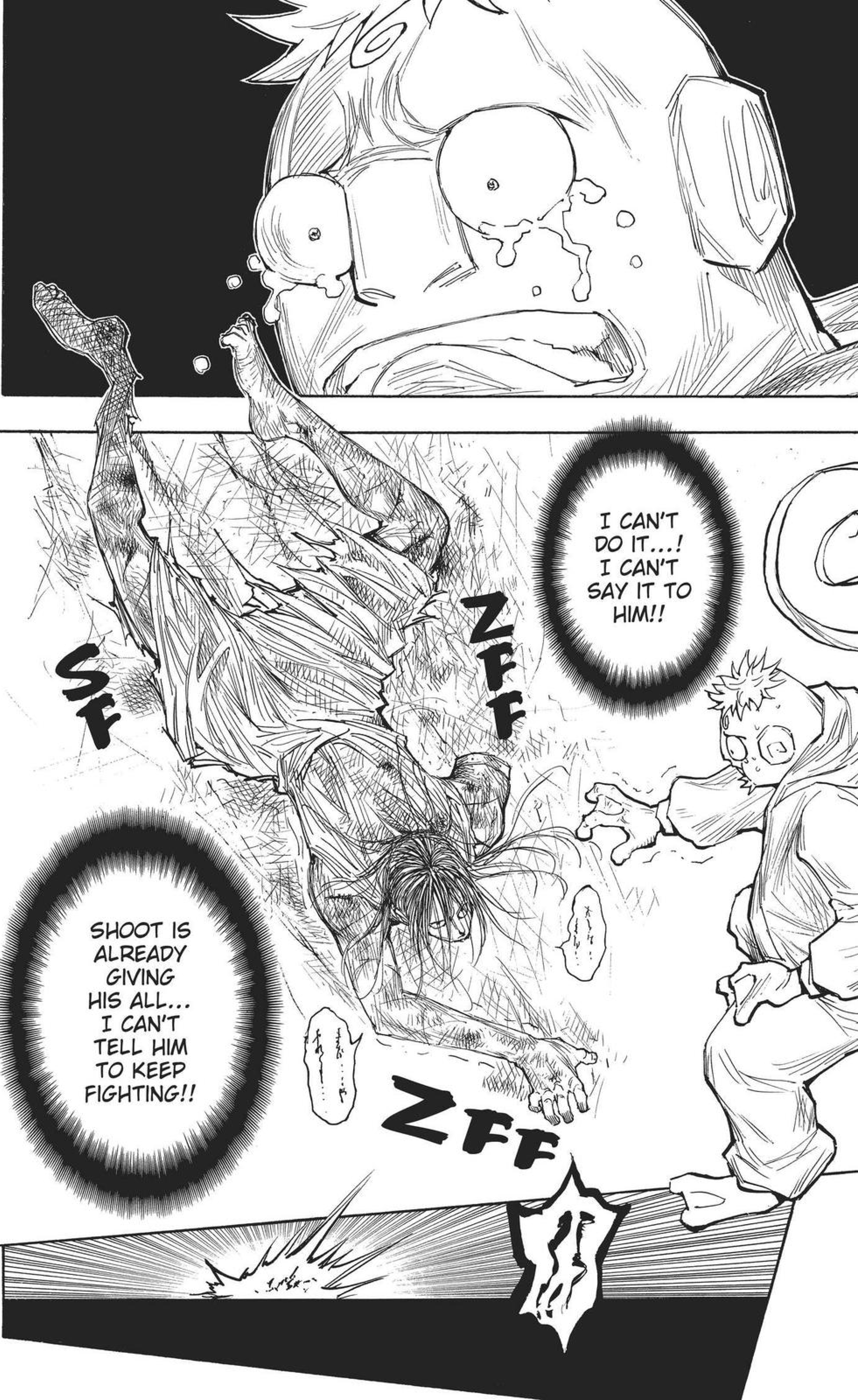

354
FSSH
MY ATTACKS DON'T AFFECT IT?!
WHAT *IS* THIS THING?!
SHP
DON'T YOU RUN AWAY!!
ANSWER ME!!
WHAT IS THIS?!
FFT!!
KABAM!!

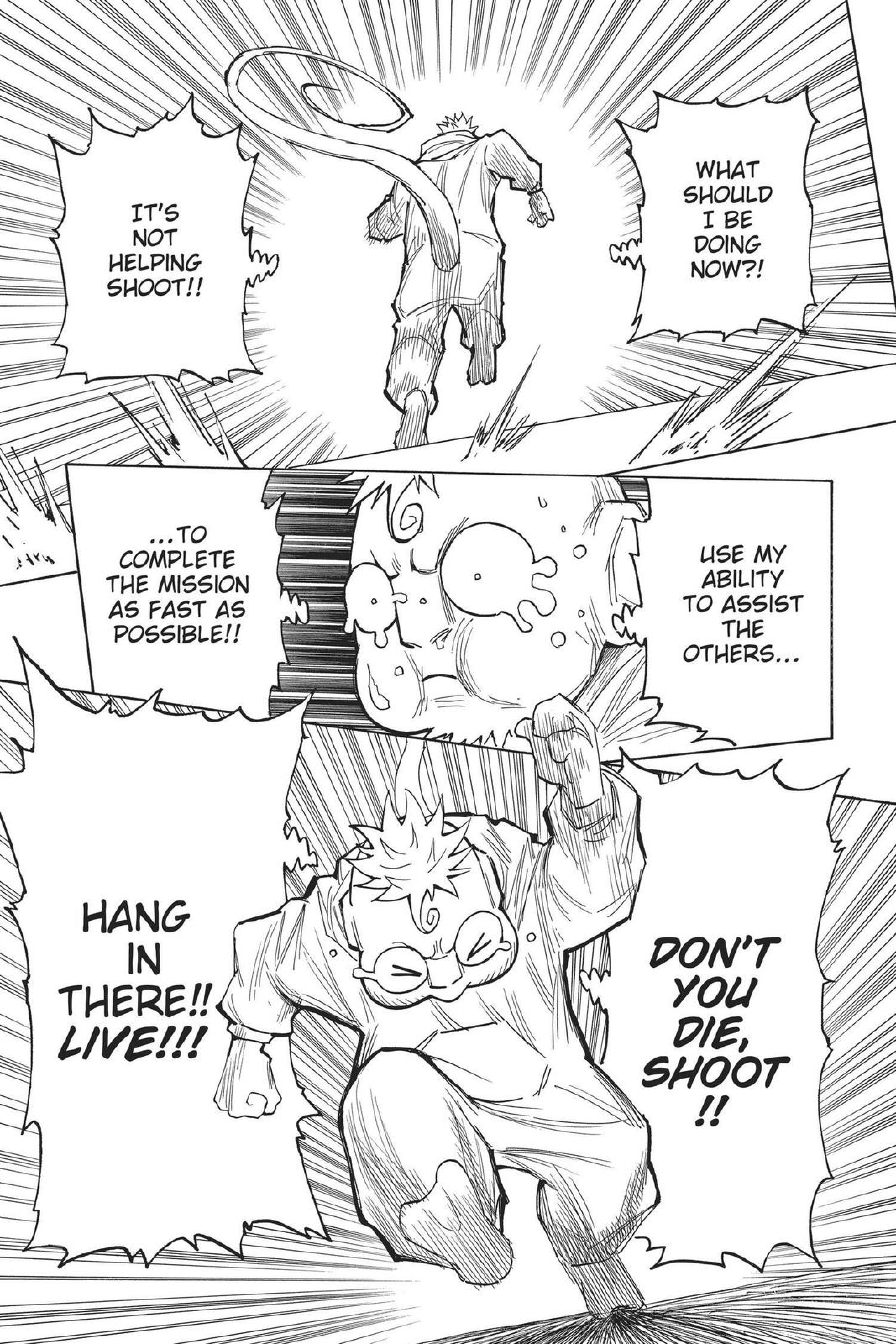

DM
AS IF I'D TELL YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH!!!
DM

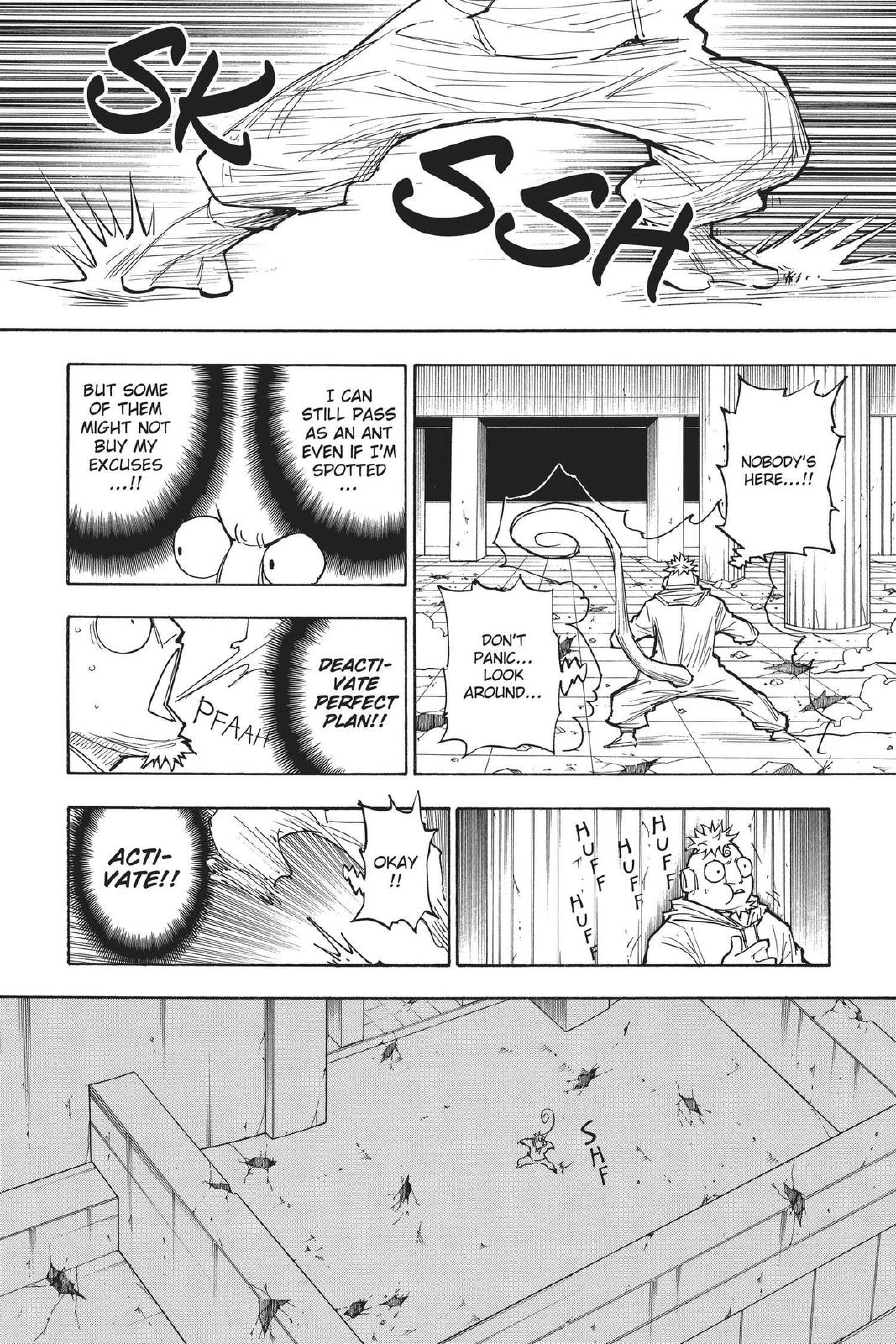

YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME TO FIND OUT!!
DM
DM
NRR!

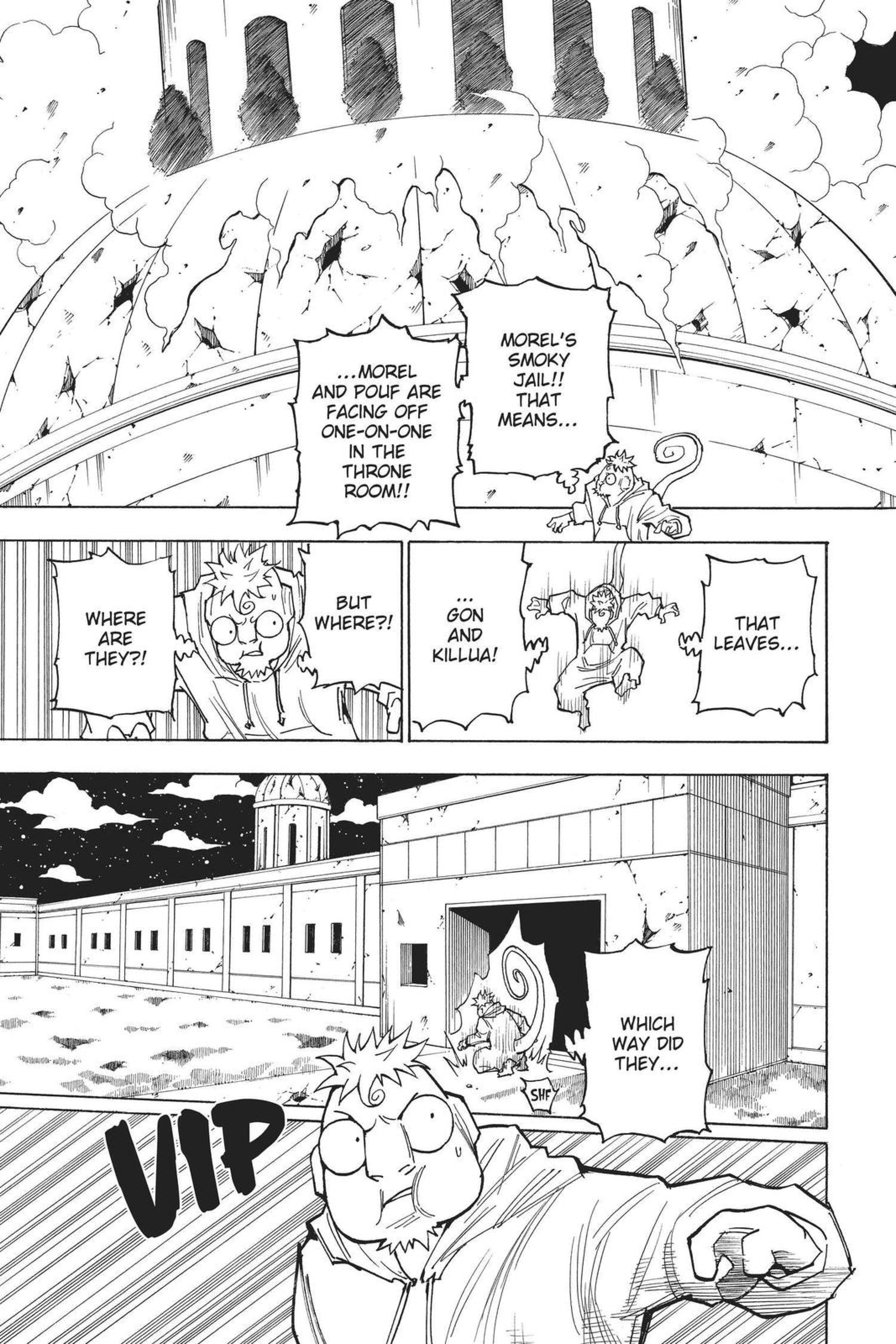

BM
KSSSH
...
KNUCKLE'S GONNA FIGHT HIM BY HIMSELF!!
I CAN'T POSSIBLY REACH HIM THROUGH THAT DEADLY ONSLAUGHT...!!
IN THAT CASE...!!
SHF
NOT TOO FAST, NOT TOO SLOW.
WALK SO I CONSUME THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF OXYGEN!!

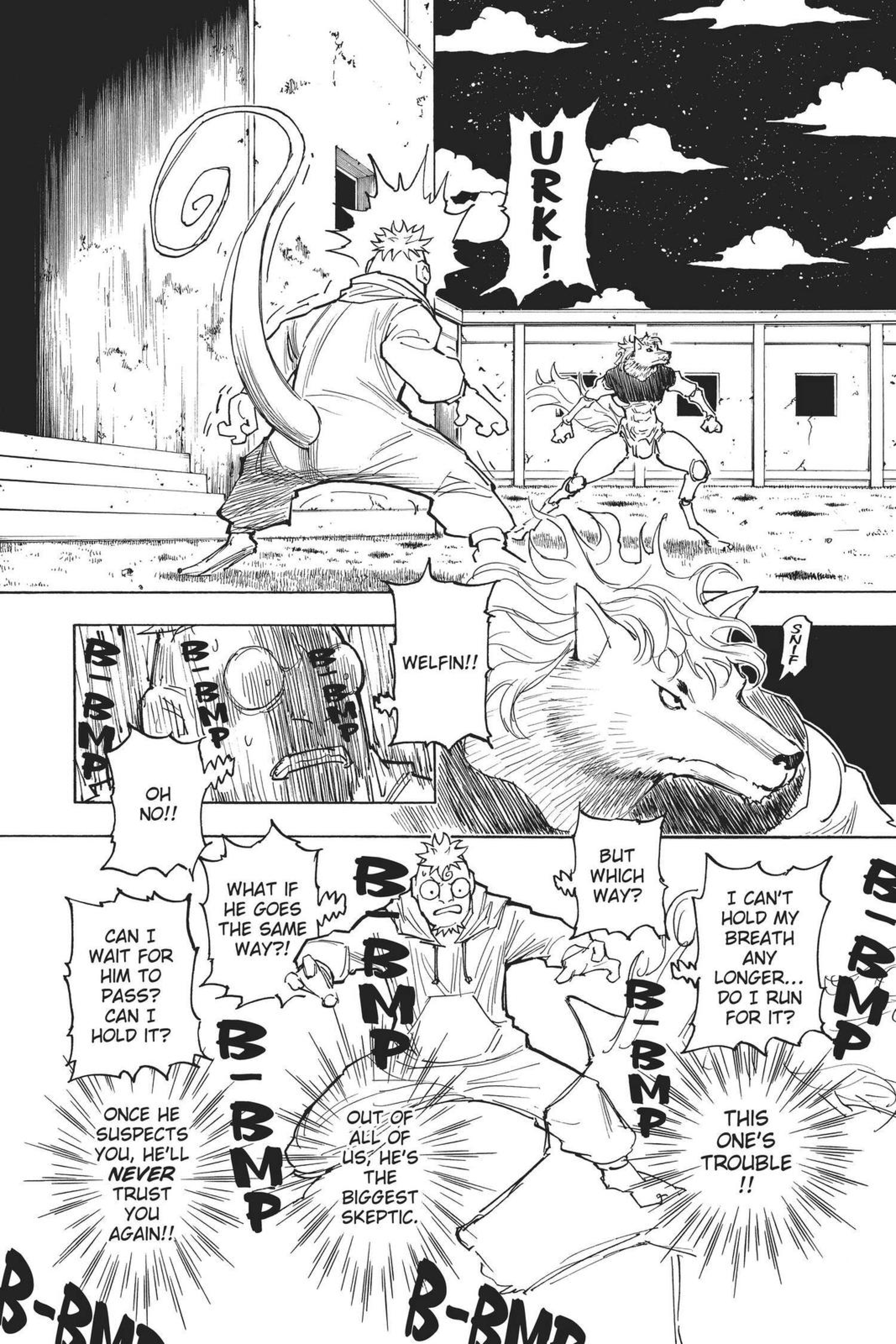

SHOOM...
WOBBLE
THUD
I CAN'T... PASS OUT...
HOTEL RAFFLESIA WILL STAY ACTIVE AS LONG AS I'M CONSCIOUS...
I...
ANY MINOR WOUND... WILL SURELY NOT BE IN VAIN!!
I CAN...
... STILL... KEEP GOING...!
ZFFF
ZF

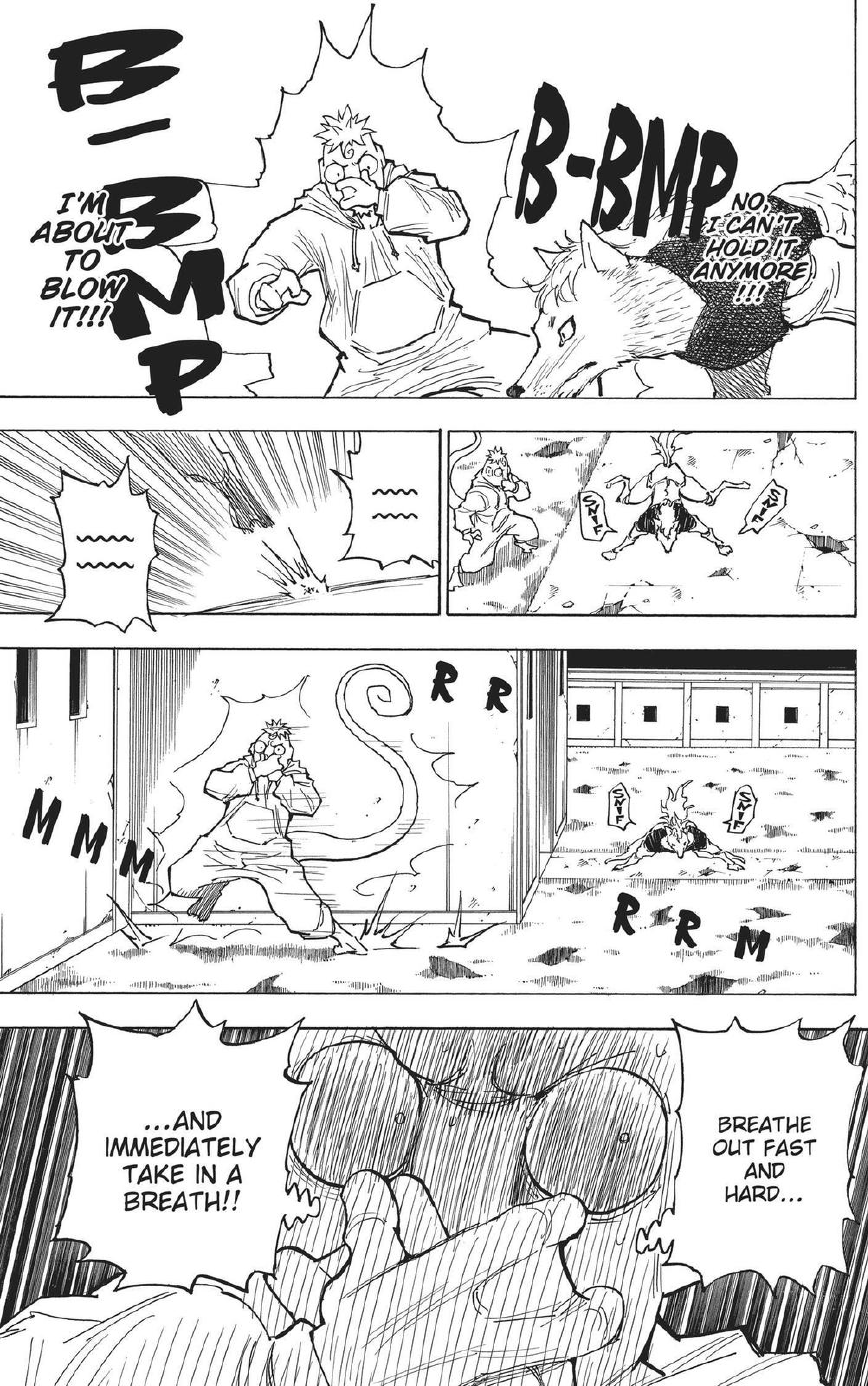

I CAN'T DO IT...! I CAN'T SAY IT TO HIM!!
ZFF
SF
SHOOT IS ALREADY GIVING HIS ALL... I CAN'T TELL HIM TO KEEP FIGHTING!!
ZFF
!?

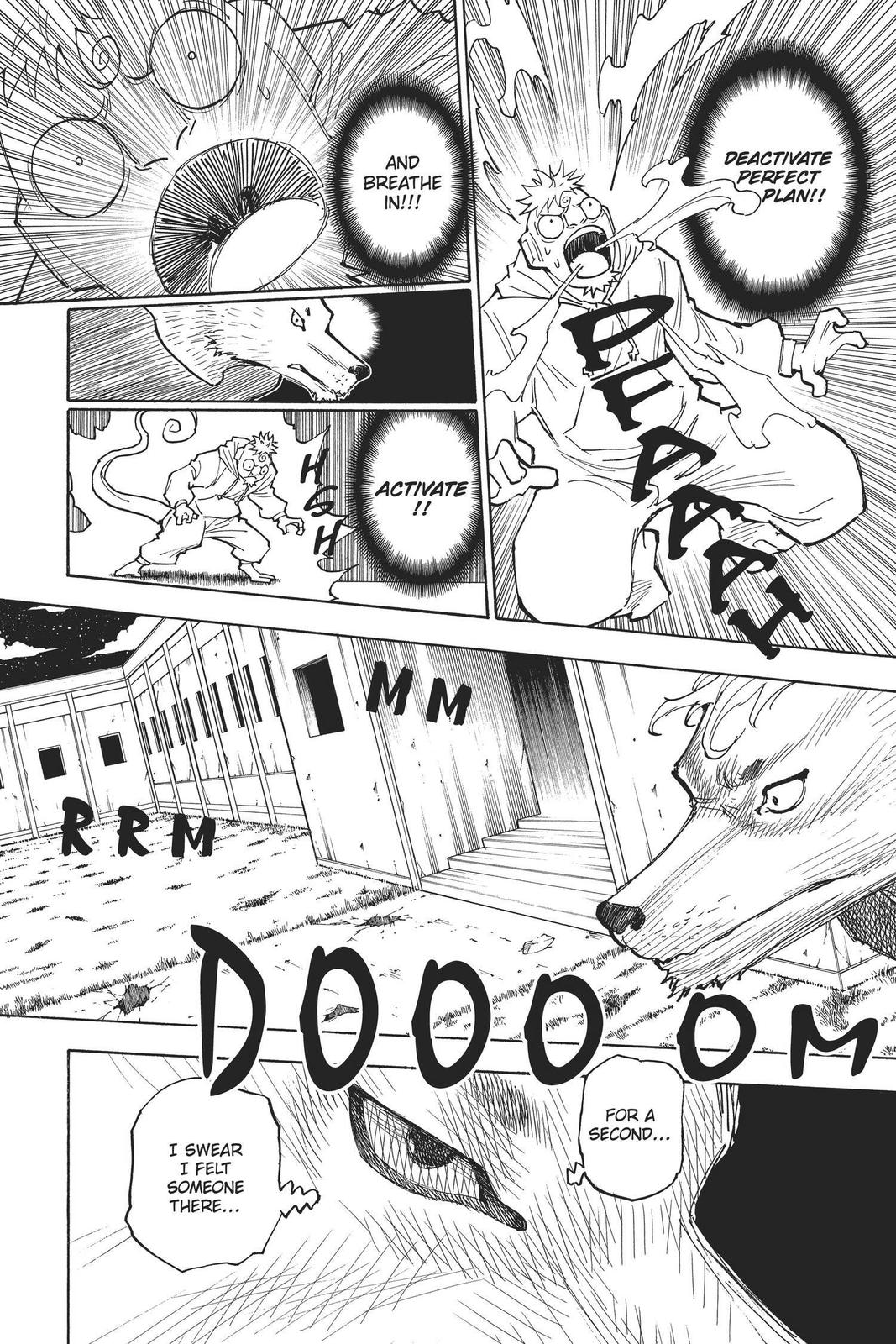

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING NOW?!
IT'S NOT HELPING SHOOT!!
USE MY ABILITY TO ASSIST THE OTHERS...
...TO COMPLETE THE MISSION AS FAST AS POSSIBLE!!
DON'T YOU DIE, SHOOT!!
HANG IN THERE!! LIVE!!!

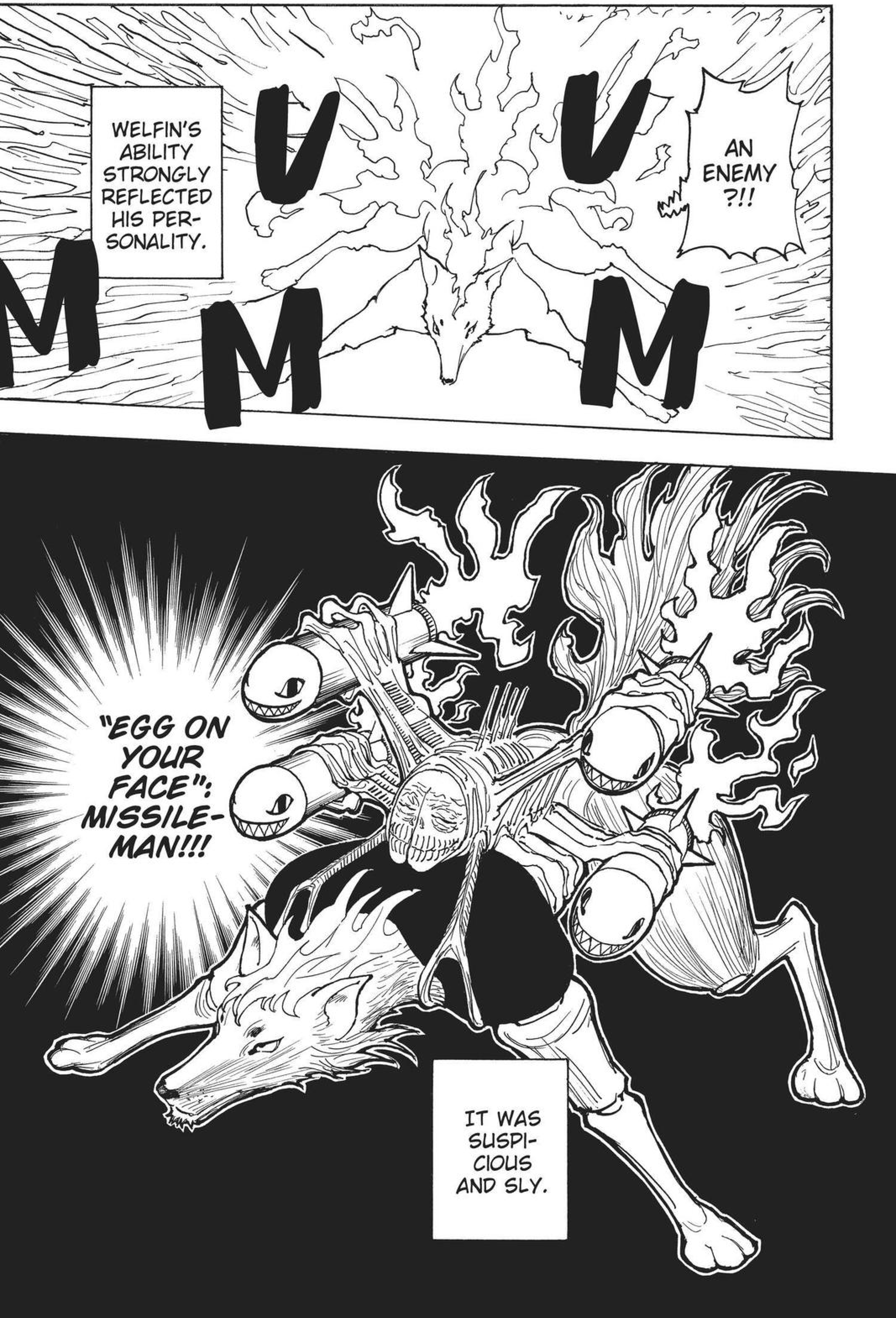

SK
SSH
NOBODY'S HERE...!!
DON'T PANIC... LOOK AROUND...
I CAN STILL PASS AS AN ANT EVEN IF I'M SPOTTED...
BUT SOME OF THEM MIGHT NOT BUY MY EXCUSES...!!
DEACTIVATE PERFECT PLAN!!
PFAAH
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
OKAY!!
ACTIVATE!!
SHF

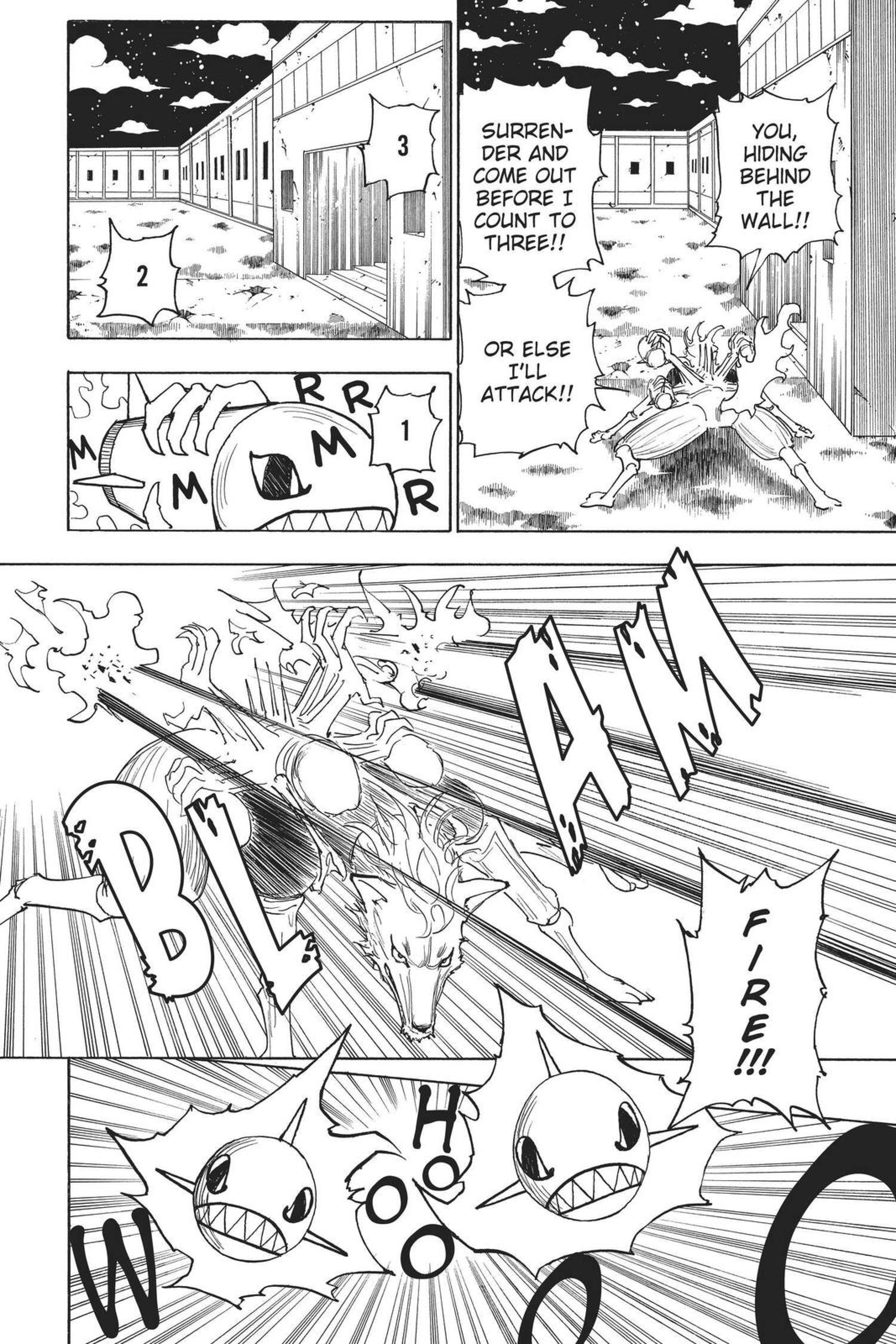

MOREL'S SMOKY JAIL!! THAT MEANS...
...MOREL AND POUF ARE FACING OFF ONE-ON-ONE IN THE THRONE ROOM!!
THAT LEAVES...
...GON AND KILLUA!
BUT WHERE?!
WHERE ARE THEY?!
WHICH WAY DID THEY...
SHF
VIP


URK!
SNIF
WELFIN!!
B-BMP
B-BMP
B-BMP
OH NO!!
B-BMP
I CAN'T HOLD MY BREATH ANY LONGER... DO I RUN FOR IT?
BUT WHICH WAY?
B-BMP
WHAT IF HE GOES THE SAME WAY?!
B-BMP
CAN I WAIT FOR HIM TO PASS? CAN I HOLD IT?
B-BMP
THIS ONE'S TROUBLE!!
OUT OF ALL OF US, HE'S THE BIGGEST SKEPTIC.
ONCE HE SUSPECTS YOU, HE'LL *NEVER* TRUST YOU AGAIN!!
B-BMP
B-BMP
B-BMP

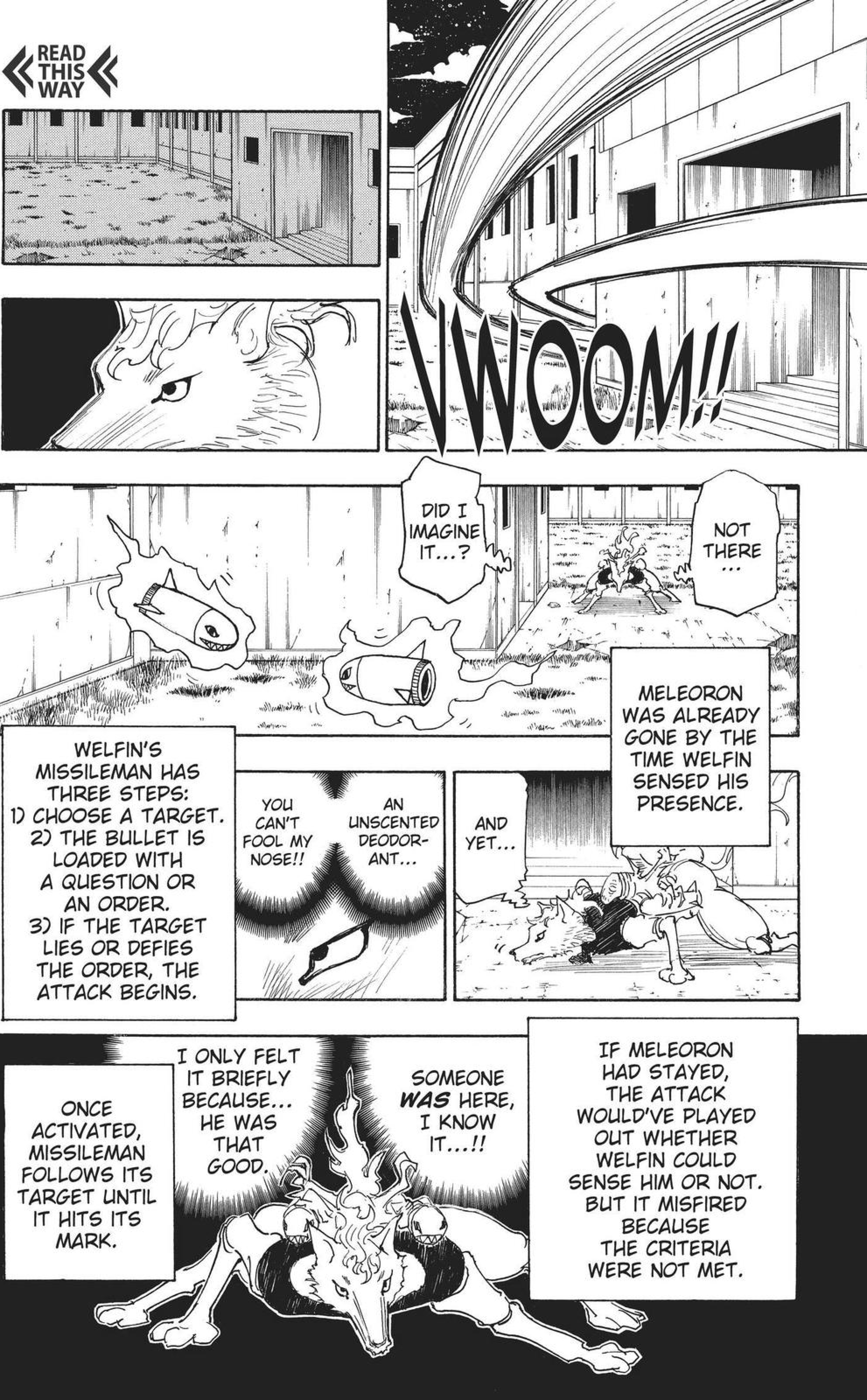

B-BMP
NO, I CAN'T HOLD IT ANYMORE!!!
I'M ABOUT TO BLOW IT!!!
B-BMP
SNIF
SNIF
~~~
~~~
~~~
~~~
R R
SNIF
SNIF
R R R M
M M M
BREATHE OUT FAST AND HARD...
...AND IMMEDIATELY TAKE IN A BREATH!!

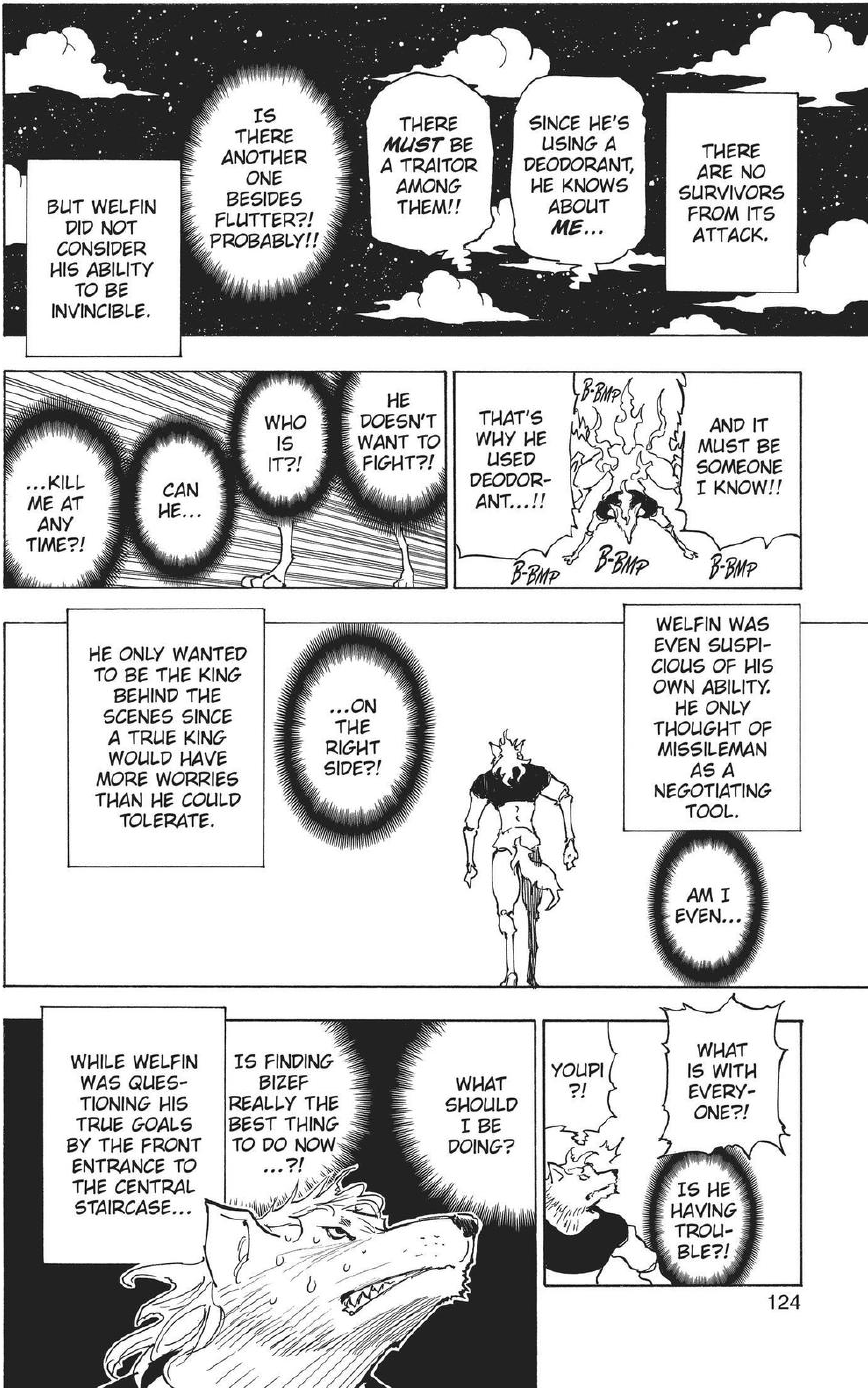

DEACTIVATE PERFECT PLAN!!
DFAAAH
AND BREATHE IN!!!
HSH
ACTIVATE!!
RRMMM
DOOOOM
FOR A SECOND...
I SWEAR I FELT SOMEONE THERE...

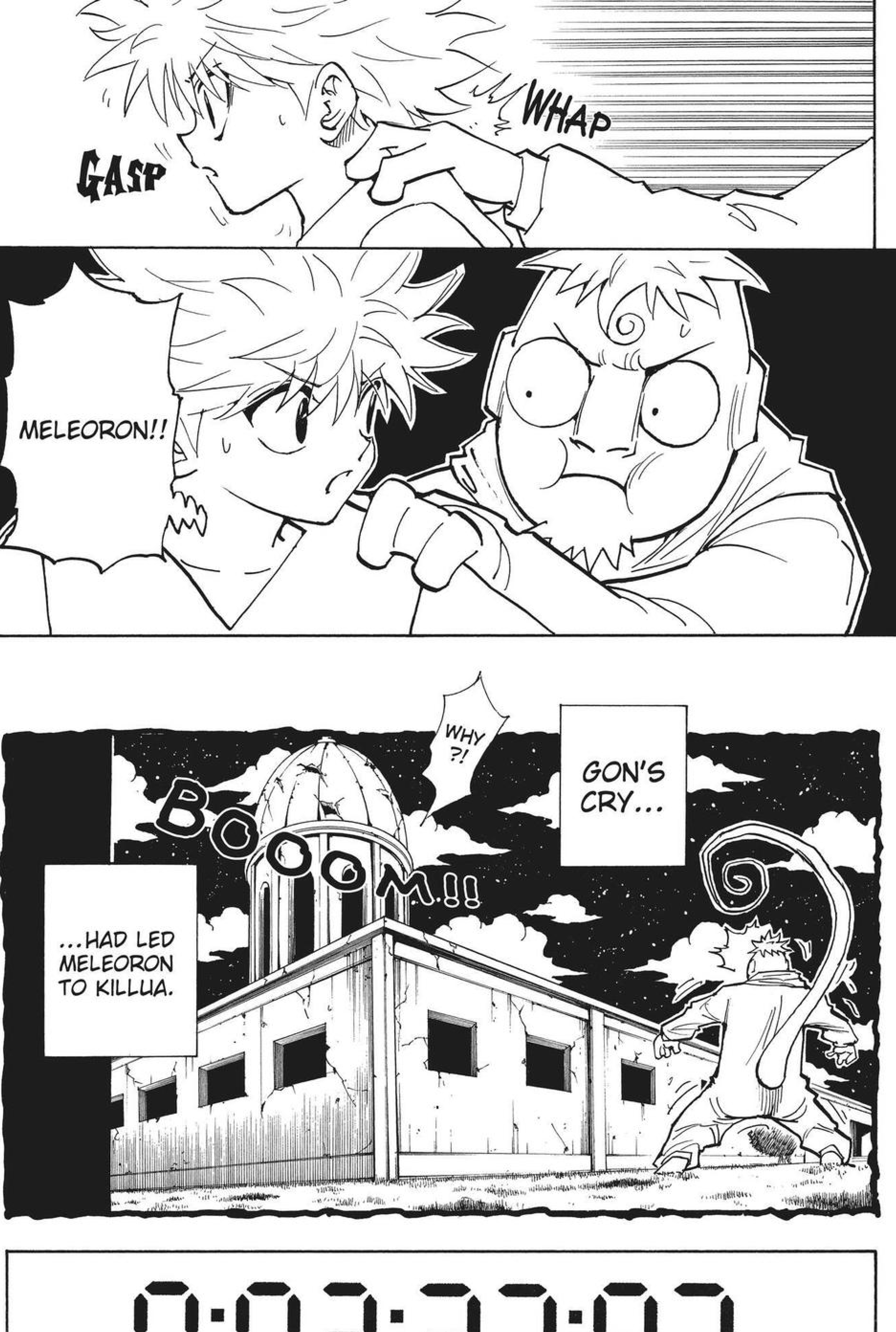

AN ENEMY?!!
WELFIN'S ABILITY STRONGLY REFLECTED HIS PERSONALITY.
VVMMMM
"EGG ON YOUR FACE": MISSILEMAN!!!
IT WAS SUSPICIOUS AND SLY.


YOU, HIDING BEHIND THE WALL!!
SURRENDER AND COME OUT BEFORE I COUNT TO THREE!!
OR ELSE I'LL ATTACK!!
3
2
1
MMMRRR
FIRE!!!
BLAM
WHOOOO

READ THIS WAY

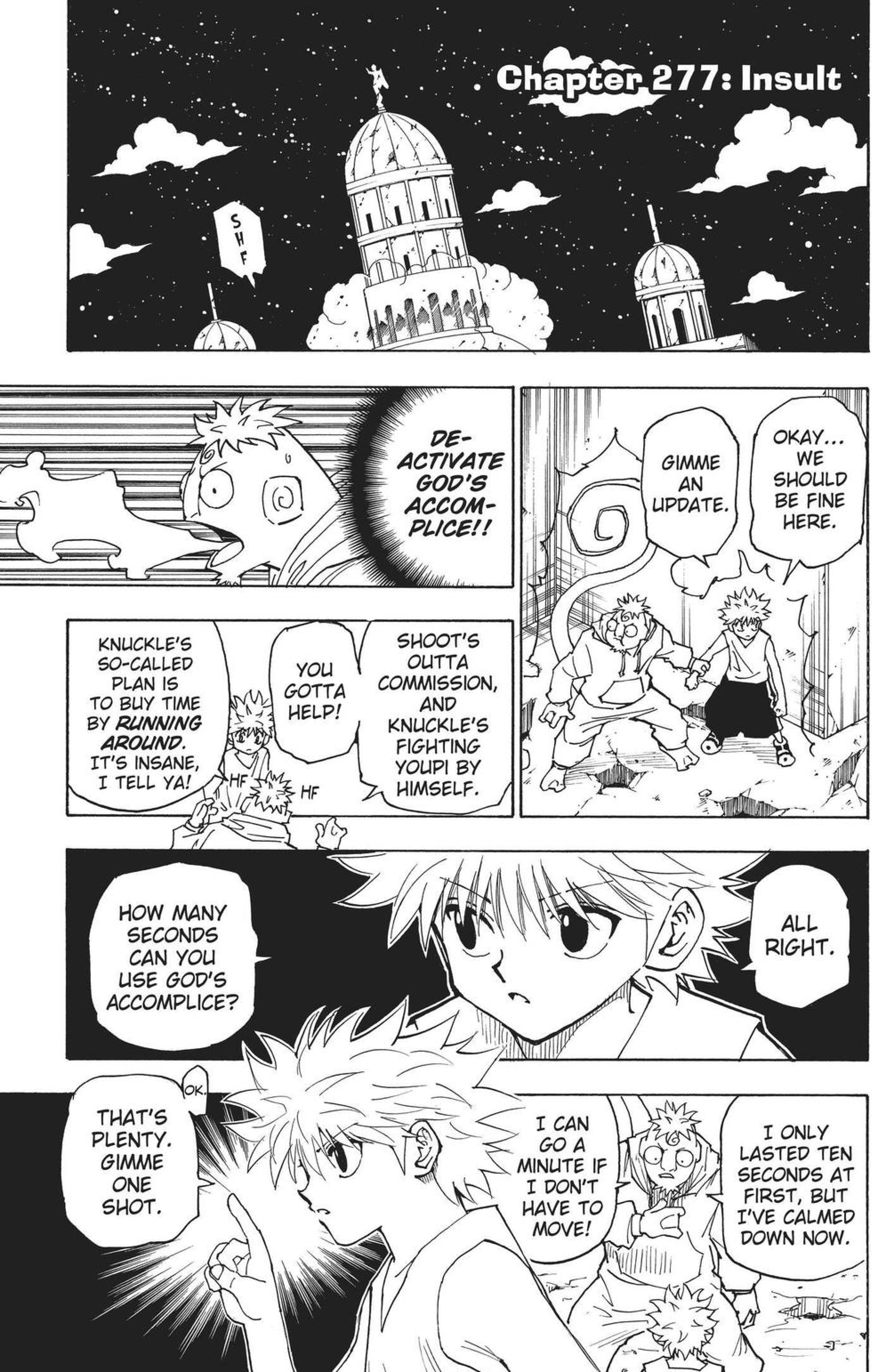

VWOOM!!
NOT THERE…
DID I IMAGINE IT…?
MELEORON WAS ALREADY GONE BY THE TIME WELFIN SENSED HIS PRESENCE.
AND YET…
AN UNSCENTED DEODORANT…
YOU CAN'T FOOL MY NOSE!!
WELFIN'S MISSILEMAN HAS THREE STEPS: 1) CHOOSE A TARGET. 2) THE BULLET IS LOADED WITH A QUESTION OR AN ORDER. 3) IF THE TARGET LIES OR DEFIES THE ORDER, THE ATTACK BEGINS.
IF MELEORON HAD STAYED, THE ATTACK WOULD'VE PLAYED OUT WHETHER WELFIN COULD SENSE HIM OR NOT. BUT IT MISFIRED BECAUSE THE CRITERIA WERE NOT MET.
SOMEONE **WAS** HERE, I KNOW IT…!!
I ONLY FELT IT BRIEFLY BECAUSE… HE WAS THAT GOOD.
ONCE ACTIVATED, MISSILEMAN FOLLOWS ITS TARGET UNTIL IT HITS ITS MARK.

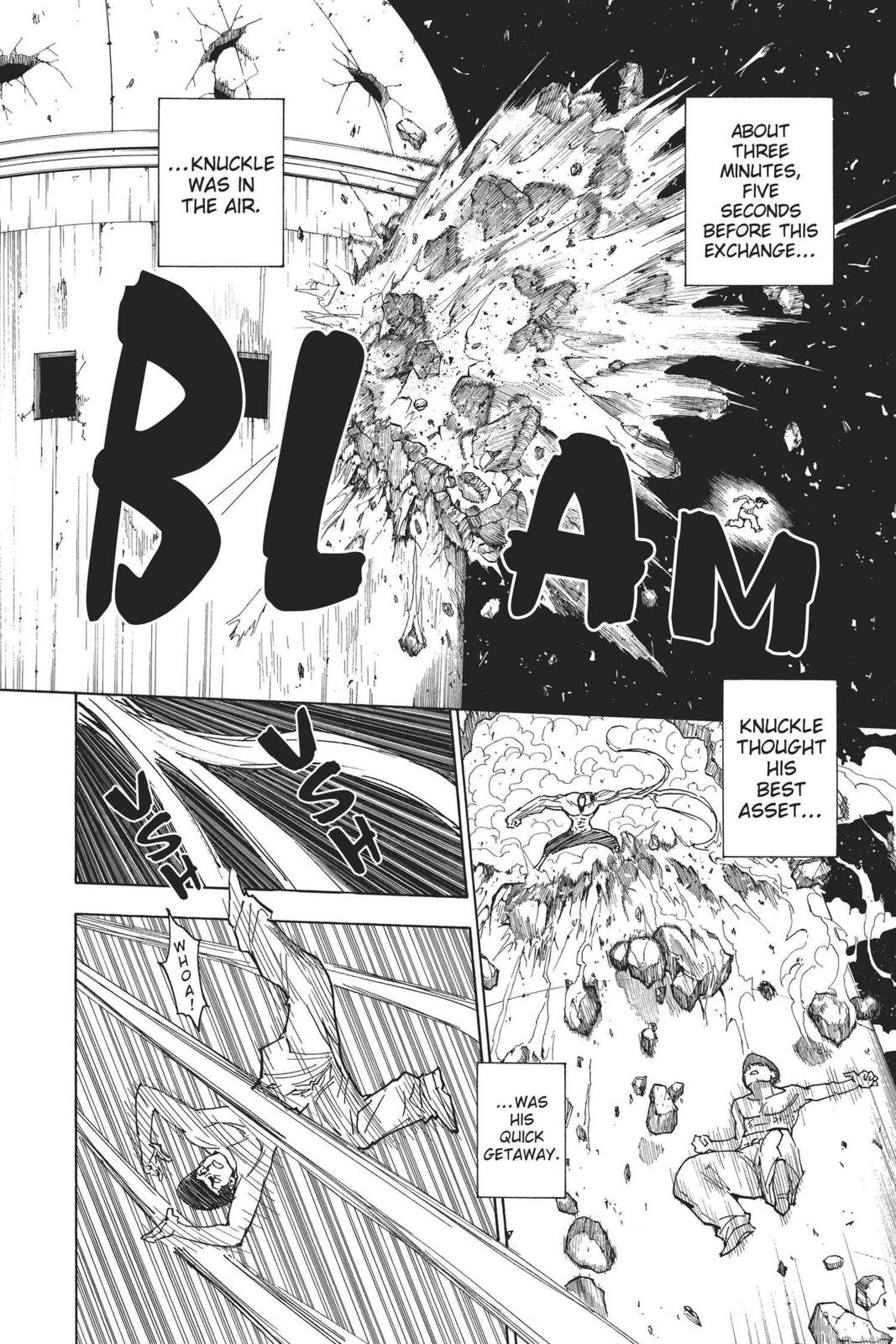

THERE ARE NO SURVIVORS FROM ITS ATTACK.
SINCE HE'S USING A DEODORANT, HE KNOWS ABOUT *ME*...
THERE ***MUST*** BE A TRAITOR AMONG THEM!!
IS THERE ANOTHER ONE BESIDES FLUTTER?! PROBABLY!!
BUT WELFIN DID NOT CONSIDER HIS ABILITY TO BE INVINCIBLE.
AND IT MUST BE SOMEONE I KNOW!!
B-BMP
THAT'S WHY HE USED DEODORANT...!!
B-BMP
B-BMP
HE DOESN'T WANT TO FIGHT?!
WHO IS IT?!
CAN HE...
...KILL ME AT ANY TIME?!
WELFIN WAS EVEN SUSPICIOUS OF HIS OWN ABILITY. HE ONLY THOUGHT OF MISSILEMAN AS A NEGOTIATING TOOL.
AM I EVEN...
...ON THE RIGHT SIDE?!
HE ONLY WANTED TO BE THE KING BEHIND THE SCENES SINCE A TRUE KING WOULD HAVE MORE WORRIES THAN HE COULD TOLERATE.
WHAT IS WITH EVERYONE?!
YOUPI ?!
IS HE HAVING TROUBLE?!
WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING?
IS FINDING BIZEF REALLY THE BEST THING TO DO NOW...?!
WHILE WELFIN WAS QUESTIONING HIS TRUE GOALS BY THE FRONT ENTRANCE TO THE CENTRAL STAIRCASE...

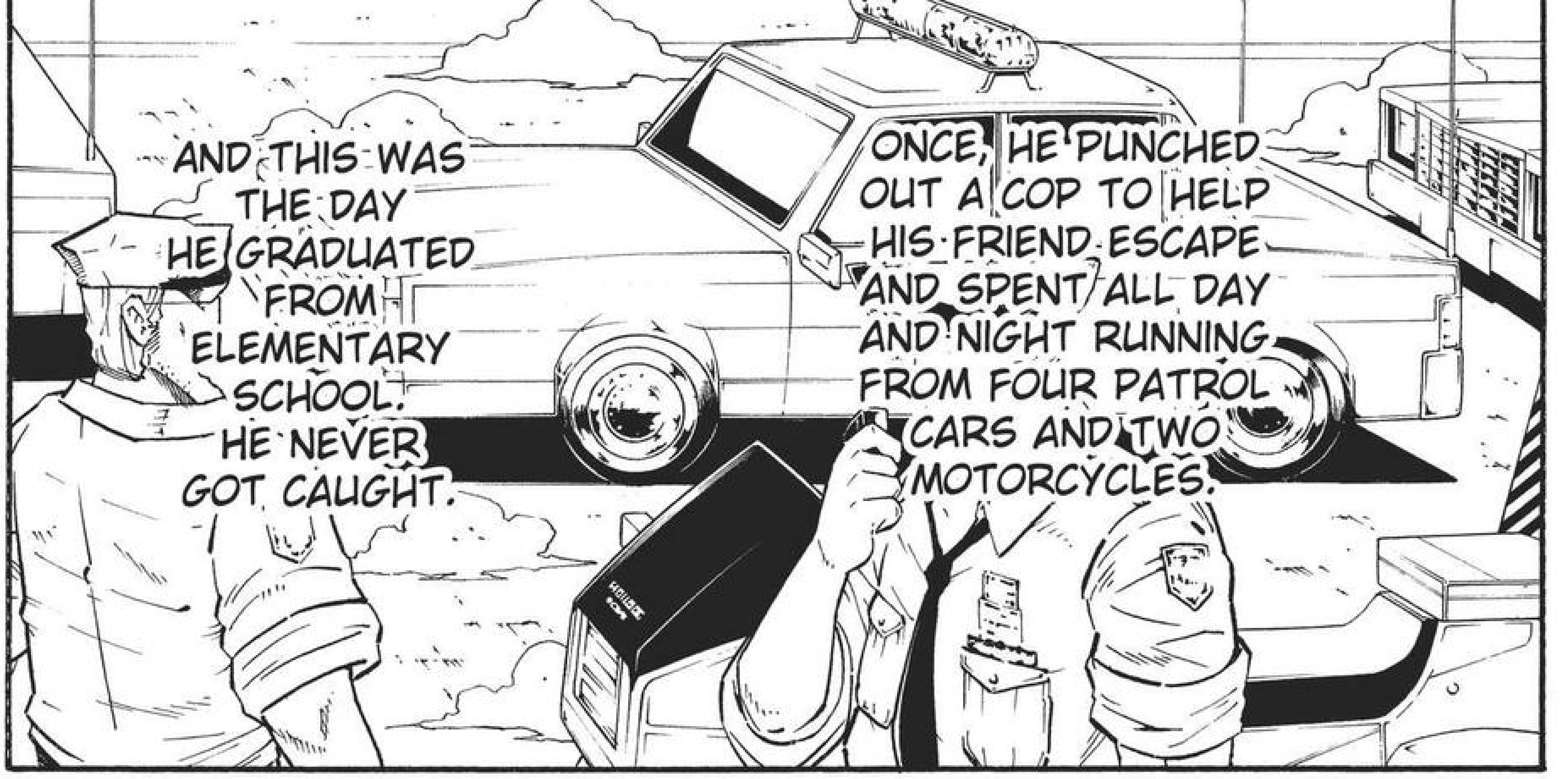

WHAP
GASP
MELEORON!!
GON'S CRY...
WHY ?!
BOOOOM!!
...HAD LED MELEORON TO KILLUA.
0:02:37:97

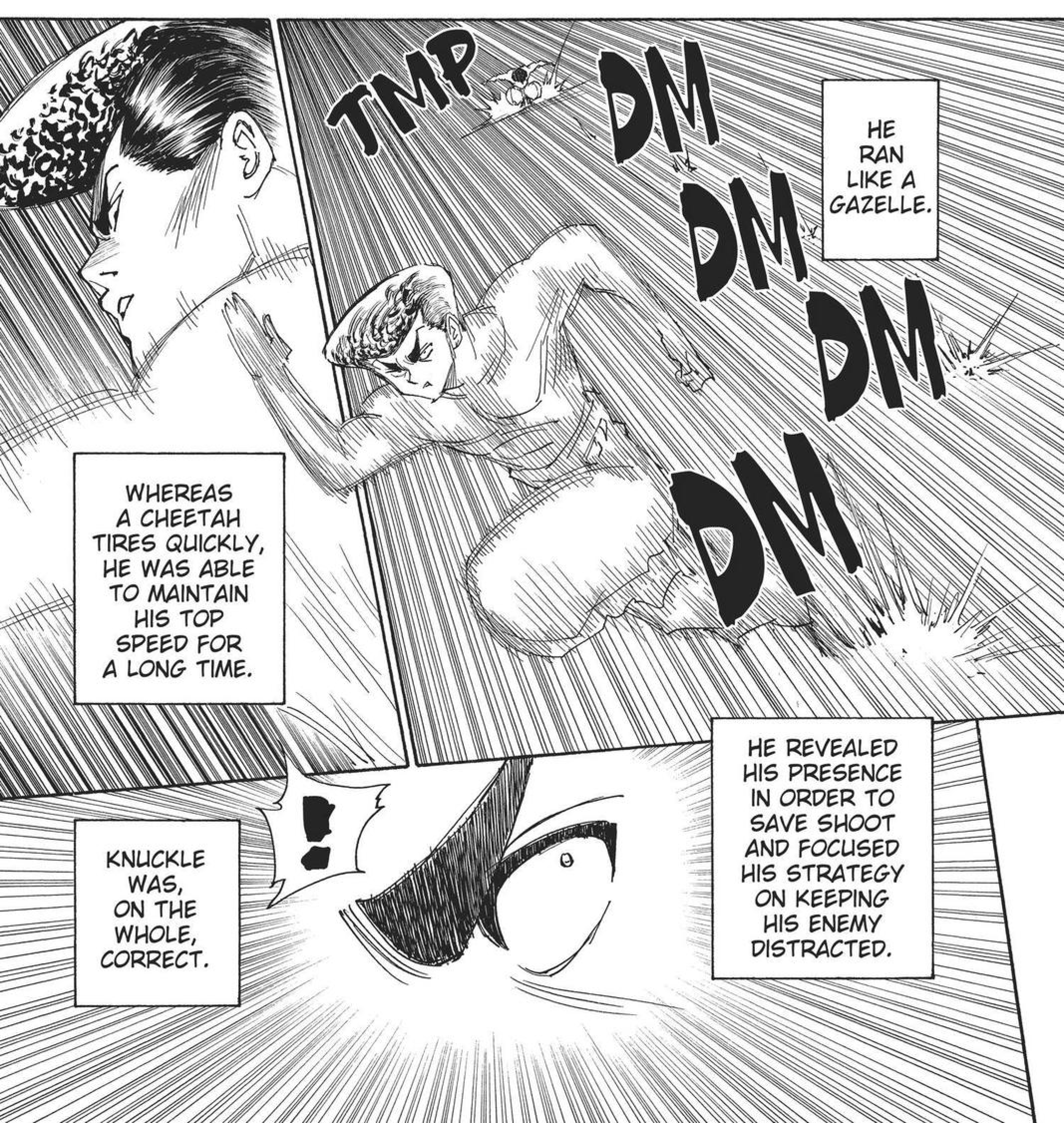
354

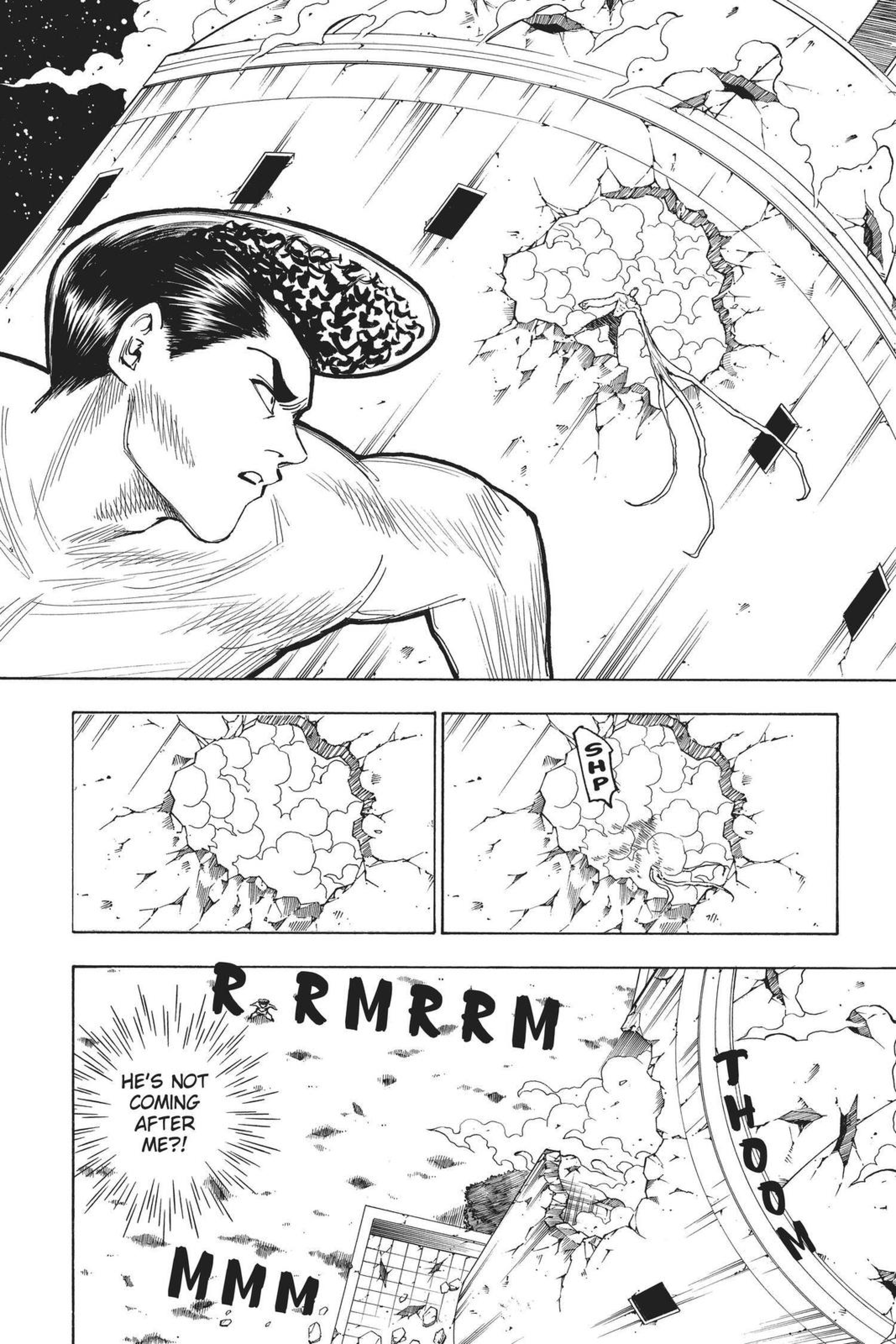
Chapter 277: Insult

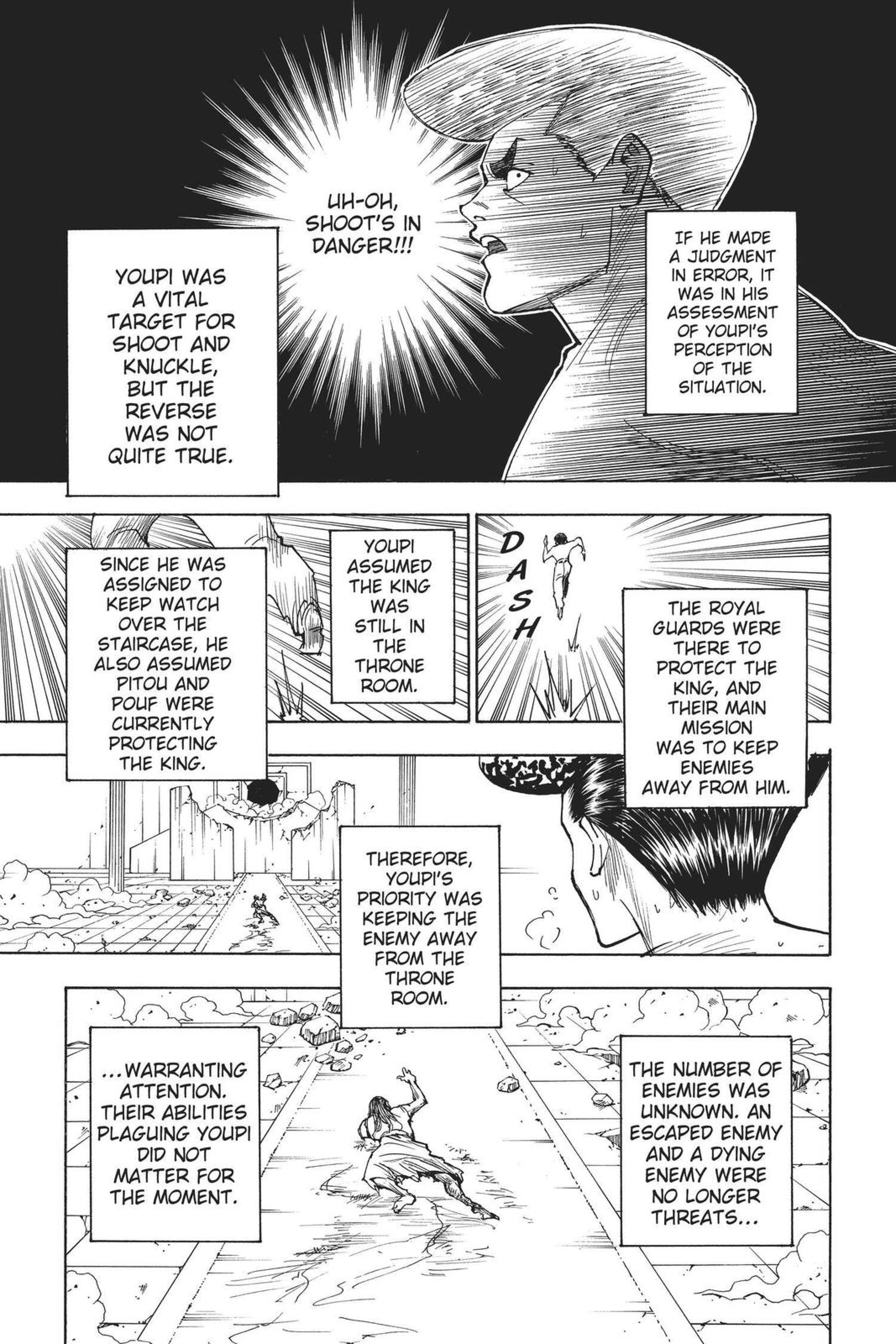

SHF
OKAY… WE SHOULD BE FINE HERE.
GIMME AN UPDATE.
DE-ACTIVATE GOD'S ACCOMPLICE!!
SHOOT'S OUTTA COMMISSION, AND KNUCKLE'S FIGHTING YOUPI BY HIMSELF.
YOU GOTTA HELP!
KNUCKLE'S SO-CALLED PLAN IS TO BUY TIME BY *RUNNING AROUND*. IT'S INSANE, I TELL YA!
HF HF
ALL RIGHT.
HOW MANY SECONDS CAN YOU USE GOD'S ACCOMPLICE?
I ONLY LASTED TEN SECONDS AT FIRST, BUT I'VE CALMED DOWN NOW.
I CAN GO A MINUTE IF I DON'T HAVE TO MOVE!
OK.
THAT'S PLENTY. GIMME ONE SHOT.

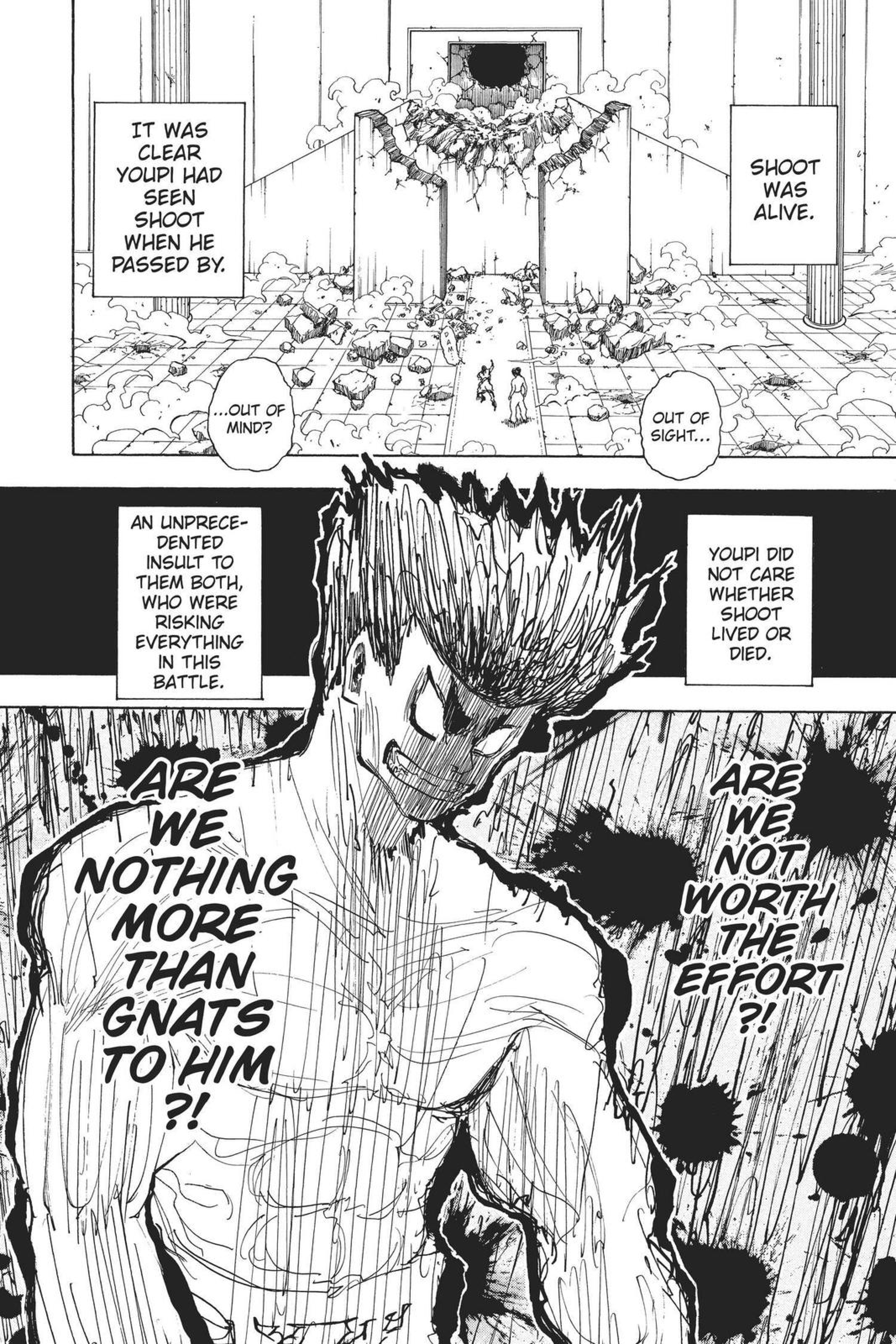

ABOUT THREE MINUTES, FIVE SECONDS BEFORE THIS EXCHANGE…
…KNUCKLE WAS IN THE AIR.
BLAM
KNUCKLE THOUGHT HIS BEST ASSET…
…WAS HIS QUICK GETAWAY.
VSH
VSH
WHOA!

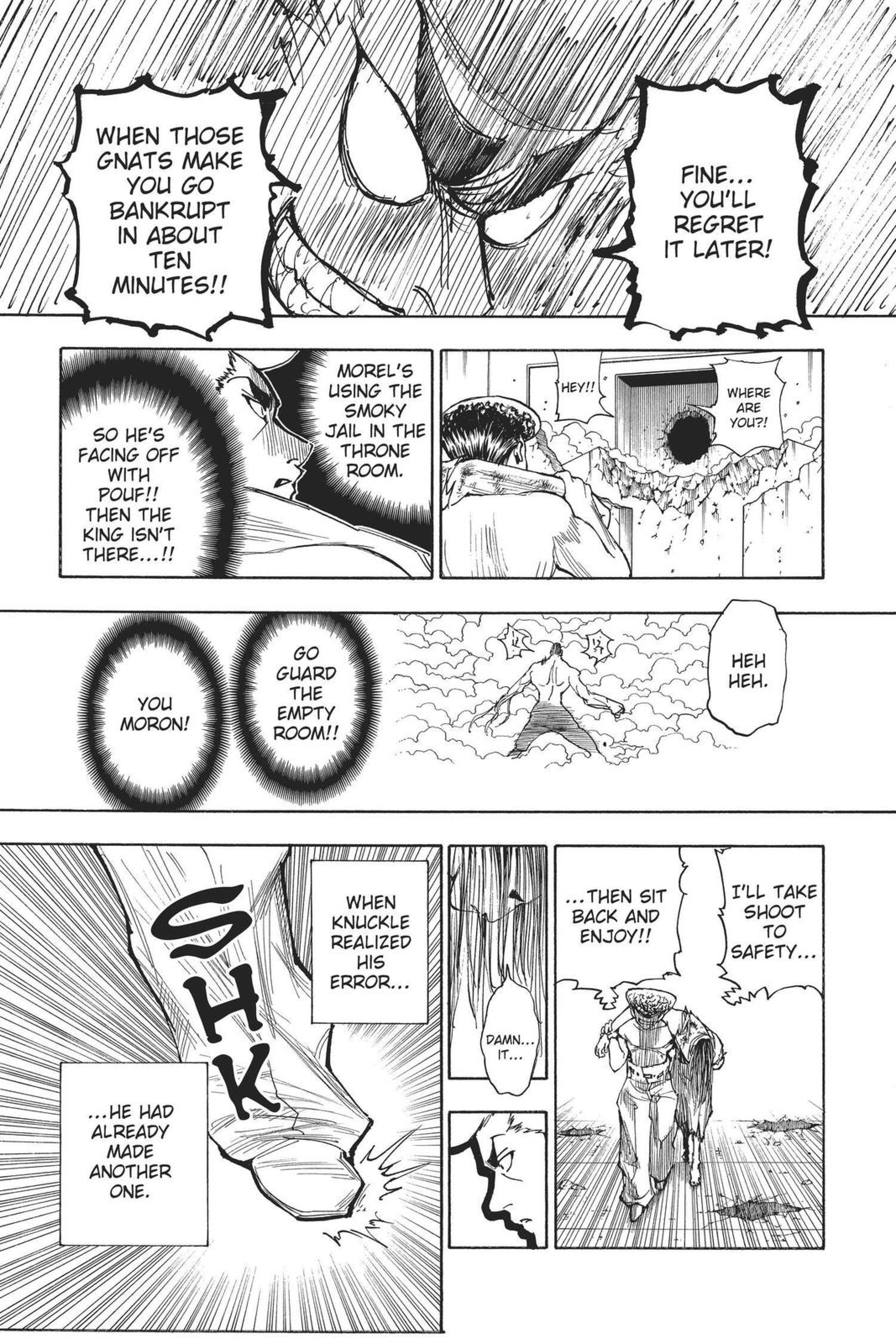

ONCE, HE PUNCHED OUT A COP TO HELP HIS FRIEND ESCAPE AND SPENT ALL DAY AND NIGHT RUNNING FROM FOUR PATROL CARS AND TWO MOTORCYCLES.
AND THIS WAS THE DAY HE GRADUATED FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. HE NEVER GOT CAUGHT.

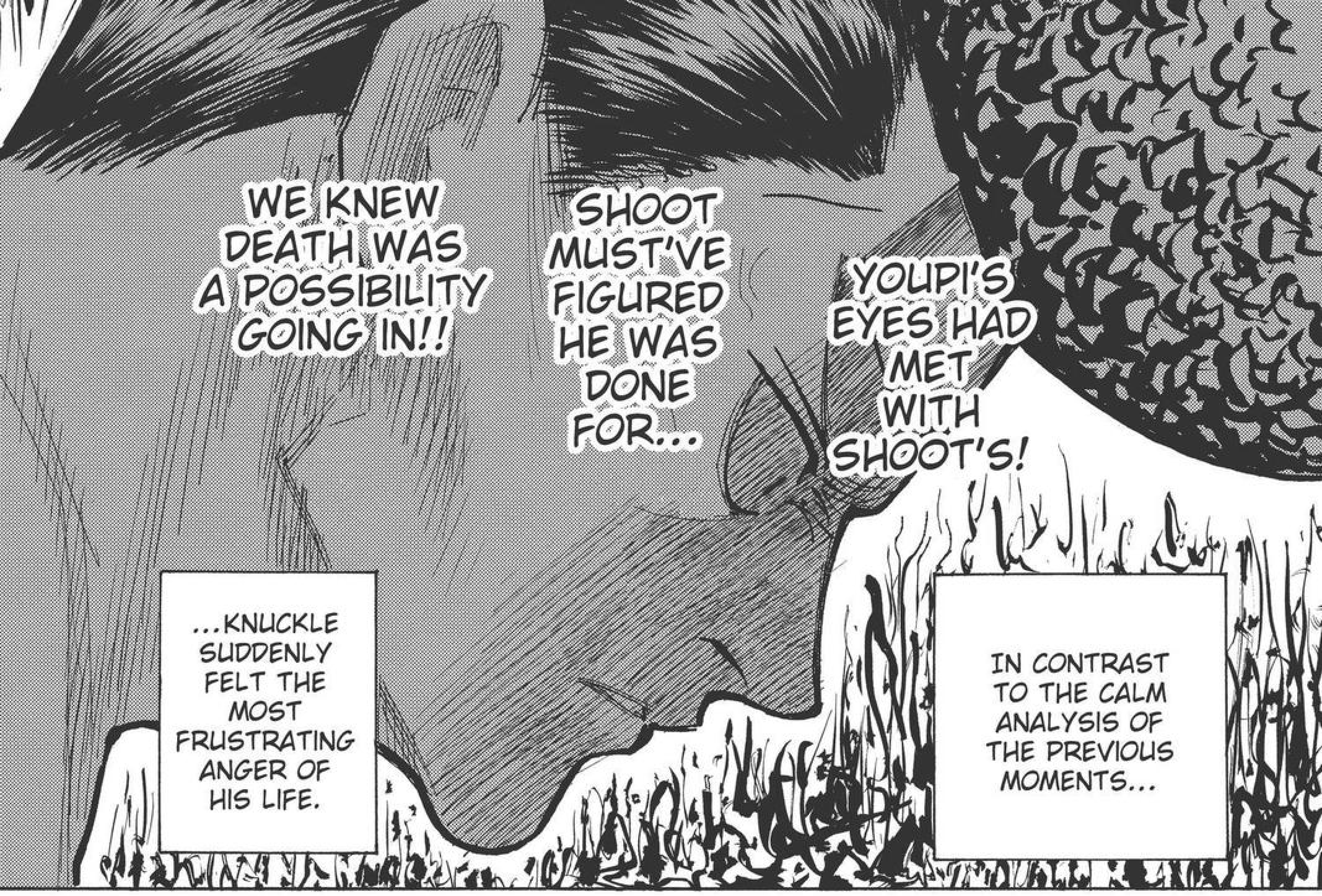

HE RAN LIKE A GAZELLE.
DM DM DM DM
TMP
WHEREAS A CHEETAH TIRES QUICKLY, HE WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN HIS TOP SPEED FOR A LONG TIME.
HE REVEALED HIS PRESENCE IN ORDER TO SAVE SHOOT AND FOCUSED HIS STRATEGY ON KEEPING HIS ENEMY DISTRACTED.
!
KNUCKLE WAS, ON THE WHOLE, CORRECT.

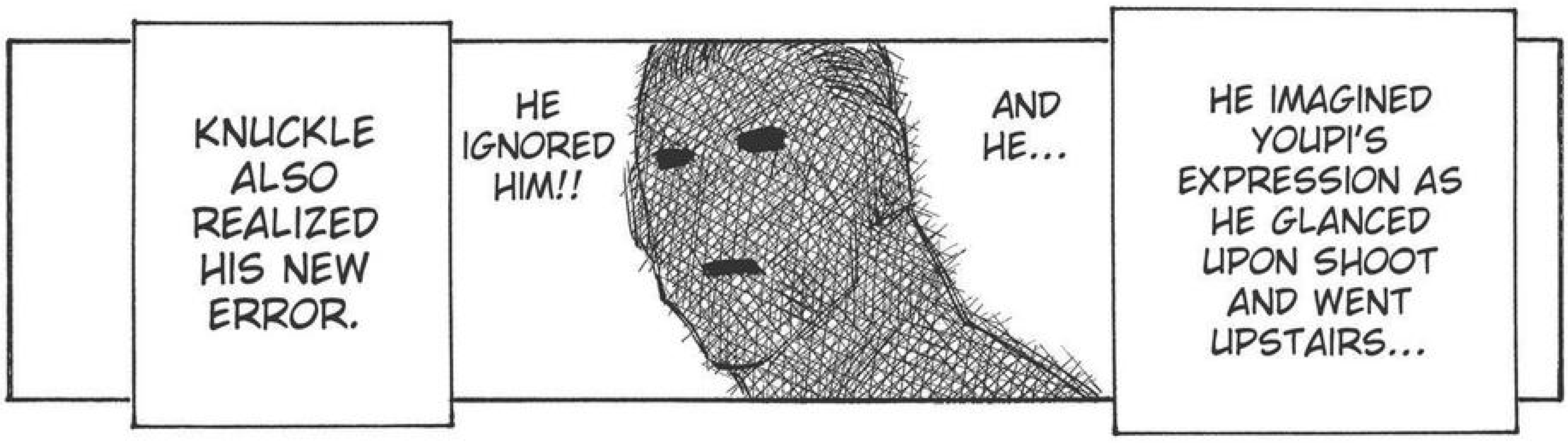

SHP
THOOM
R RMRRRM
MMM
HE'S NOT COMING AFTER ME?!

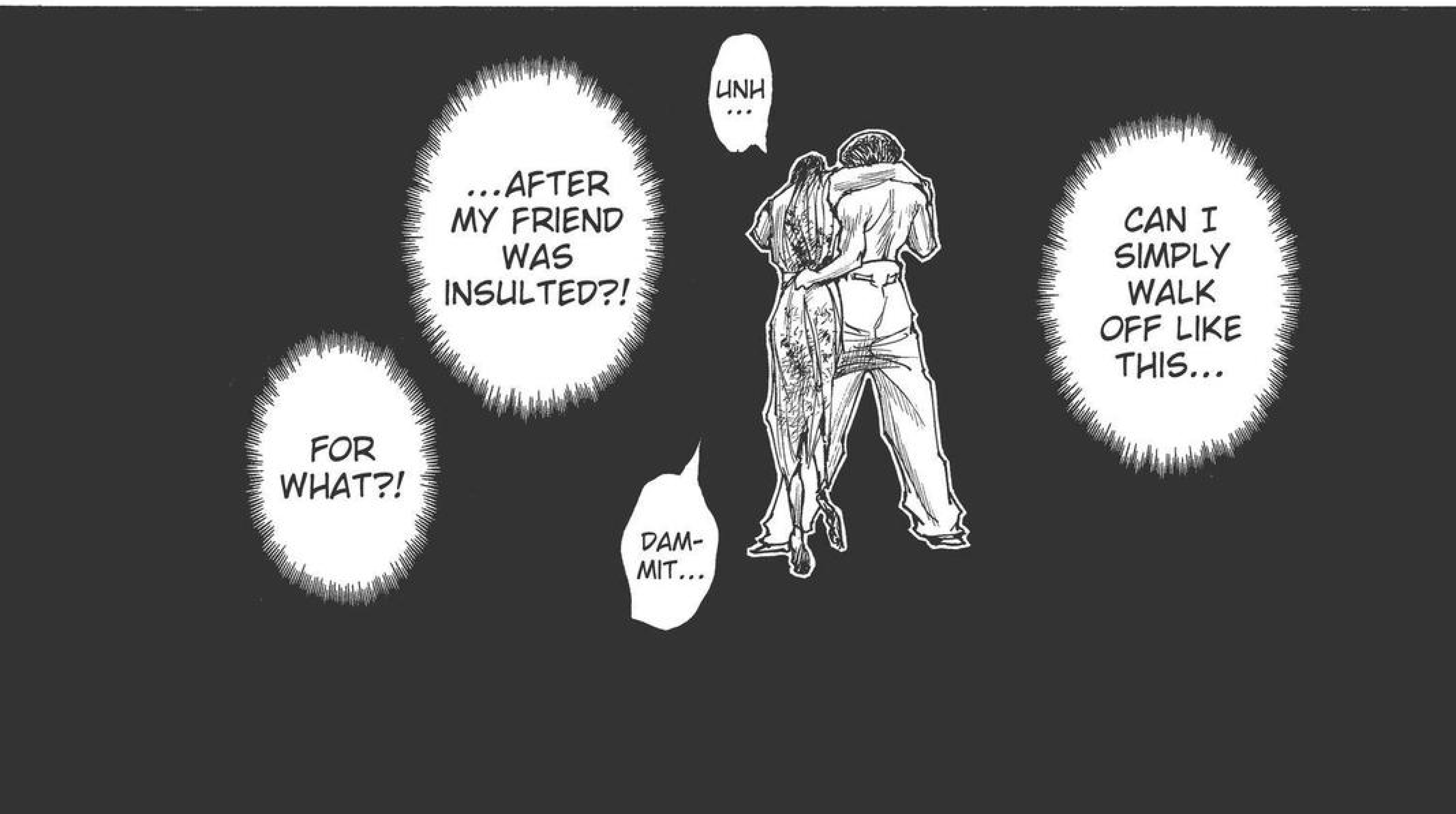

UH-OH, SHOOT'S IN DANGER!!!
IF HE MADE A JUDGMENT IN ERROR, IT WAS IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF YOUPI'S PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION.
YOUPI WAS A VITAL TARGET FOR SHOOT AND KNUCKLE, BUT THE REVERSE WAS NOT QUITE TRUE.
DASH
YOUPI ASSUMED THE KING WAS STILL IN THE THRONE ROOM.
SINCE HE WAS ASSIGNED TO KEEP WATCH OVER THE STAIRCASE, HE ALSO ASSUMED PITOU AND POUF WERE CURRENTLY PROTECTING THE KING.
THE ROYAL GUARDS WERE THERE TO PROTECT THE KING, AND THEIR MAIN MISSION WAS TO KEEP ENEMIES AWAY FROM HIM.
THEREFORE, YOUPI'S PRIORITY WAS KEEPING THE ENEMY AWAY FROM THE THRONE ROOM.
THE NUMBER OF ENEMIES WAS UNKNOWN. AN ESCAPED ENEMY AND A DYING ENEMY WERE NO LONGER THREATS...
...WARRANTING ATTENTION. THEIR ABILITIES PLAGUING YOUPI DID NOT MATTER FOR THE MOMENT.

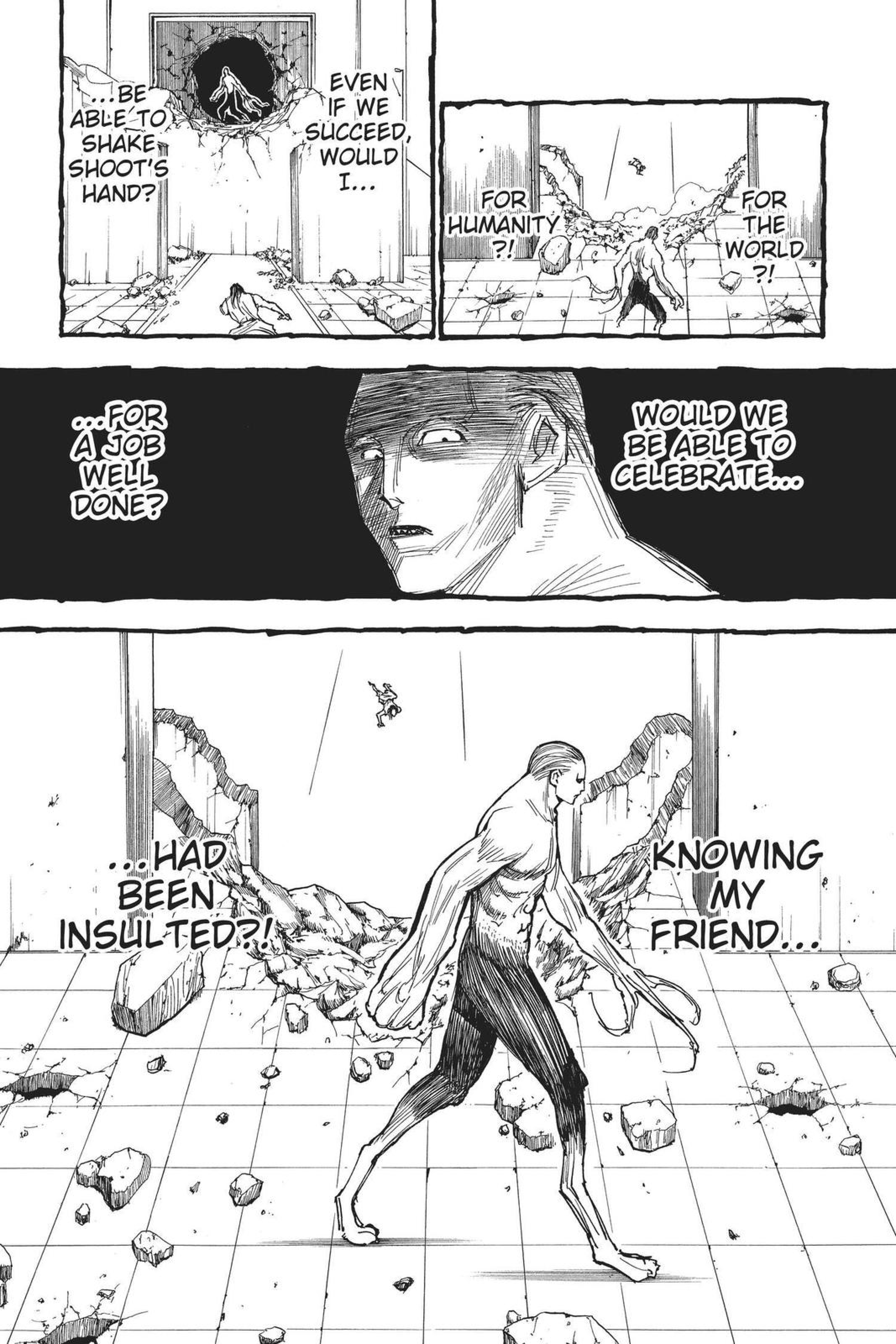

SHOOT WAS ALIVE.
IT WAS CLEAR YOUPI HAD SEEN SHOOT WHEN HE PASSED BY.
DAM
OUT OF SIGHT...
...OUT OF MIND?
YOUPI DID NOT CARE WHETHER SHOOT LIVED OR DIED.
AN UNPRECEDENTED INSULT TO THEM BOTH, WHO WERE RISKING EVERYTHING IN THIS BATTLE.
ARE WE NOT WORTH THE EFFORT?!
ARE WE NOTHING MORE THAN GNATS TO HIM?!

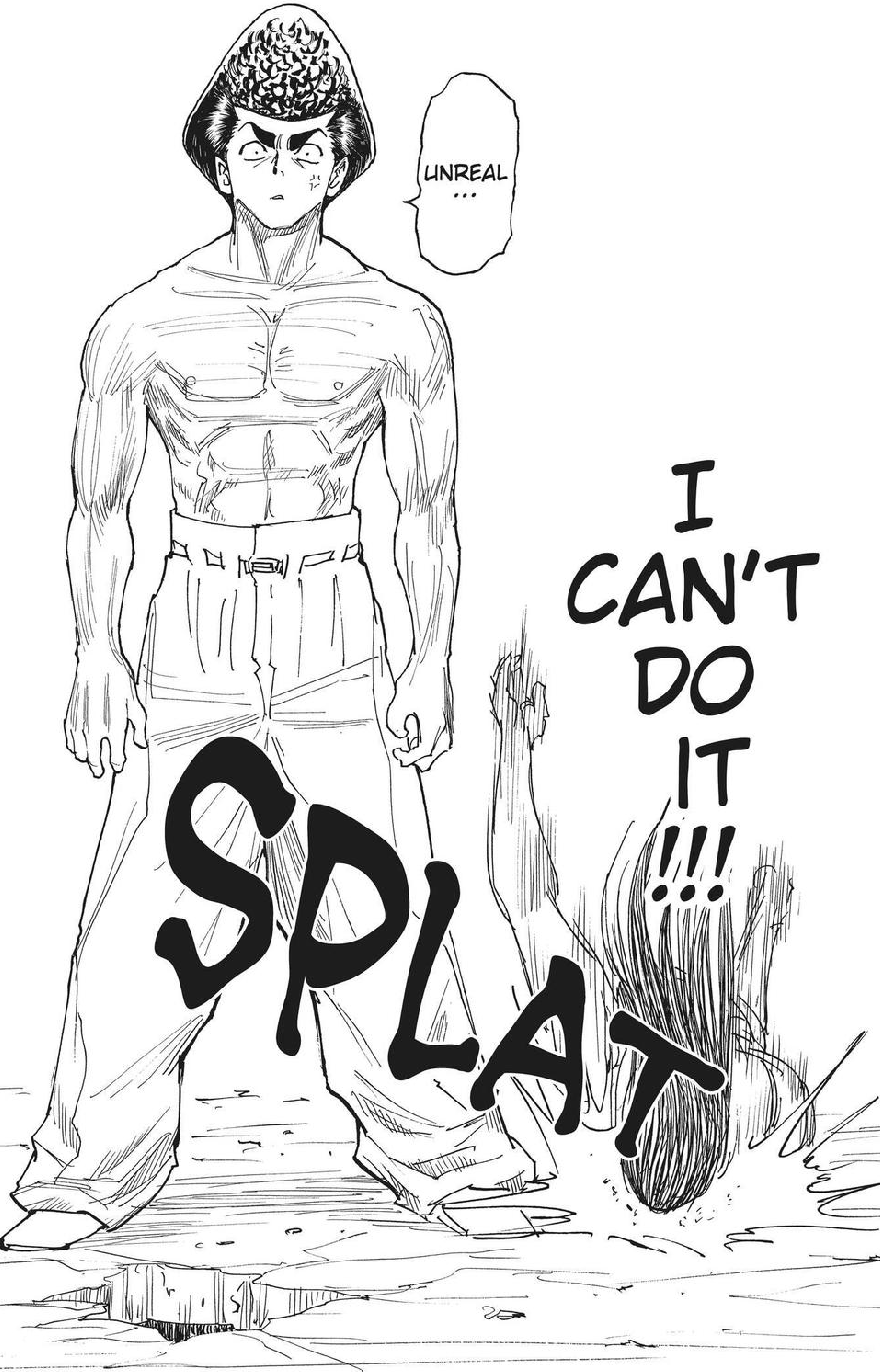

FINE... YOU'LL REGRET IT LATER!
WHEN THOSE GNATS MAKE YOU GO BANKRUPT IN ABOUT TEN MINUTES!!
HEY!!
WHERE ARE YOU?!
MOREL'S USING THE SMOKY JAIL IN THE THRONE ROOM.
SO HE'S FACING OFF WITH POUF!! THEN THE KING ISN'T THERE...!!
HEH HEH.
!?
!?
GO GUARD THE EMPTY ROOM!!
YOU MORON!
I'LL TAKE SHOOT TO SAFETY...
...THEN SIT BACK AND ENJOY!!
DAMN... IT...
WHEN KNUCKLE REALIZED HIS ERROR...
SHK
...HE HAD ALREADY MADE ANOTHER ONE.

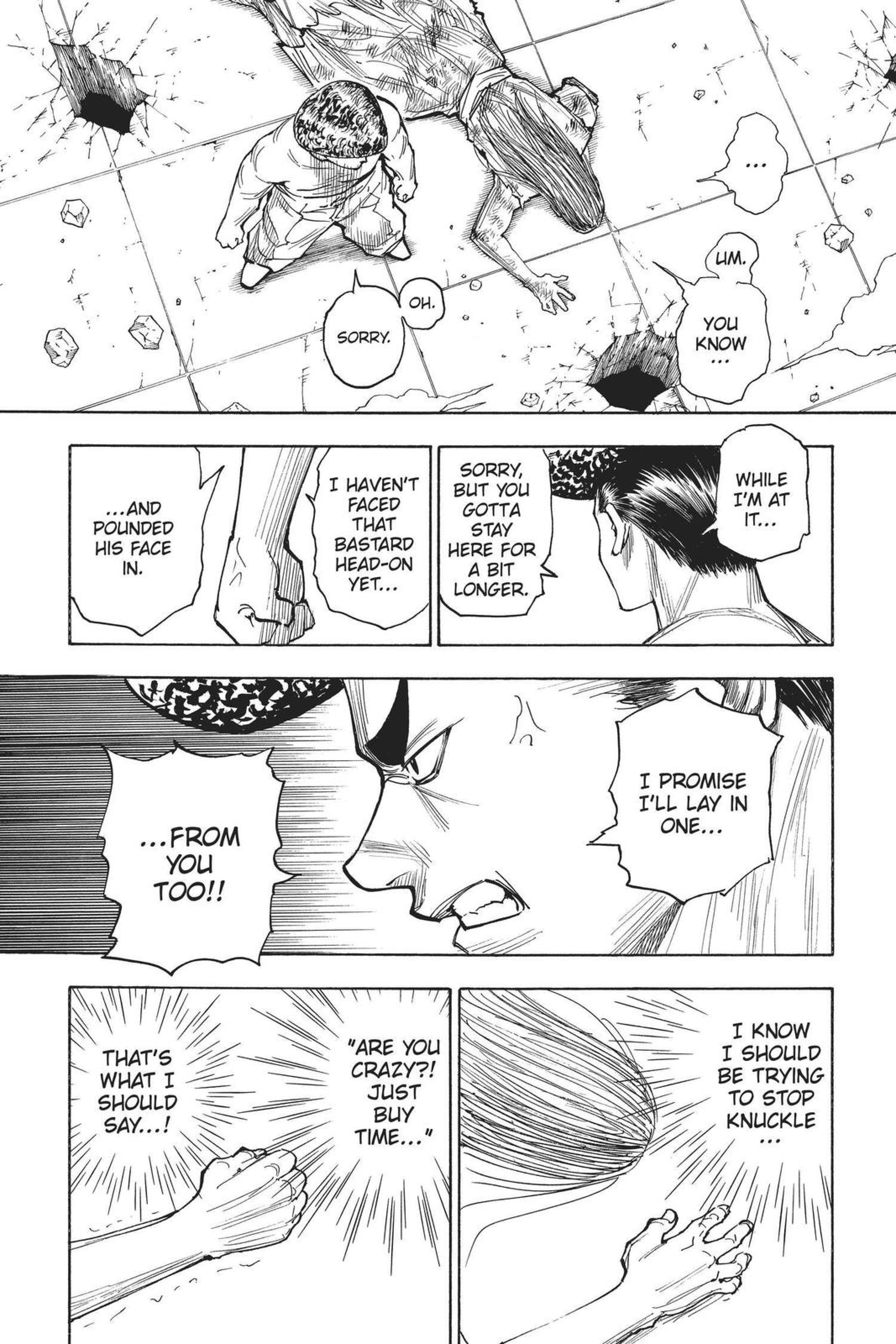

YOUPI'S EYES HAD MET WITH SHOOT'S!
SHOOT MUST'VE FIGURED HE WAS DONE FOR...
WE KNEW DEATH WAS A POSSIBILITY GOING IN!!
IN CONTRAST TO THE CALM ANALYSIS OF THE PREVIOUS MOMENTS...
...KNUCKLE SUDDENLY FELT THE MOST FRUSTRATING ANGER OF HIS LIFE.

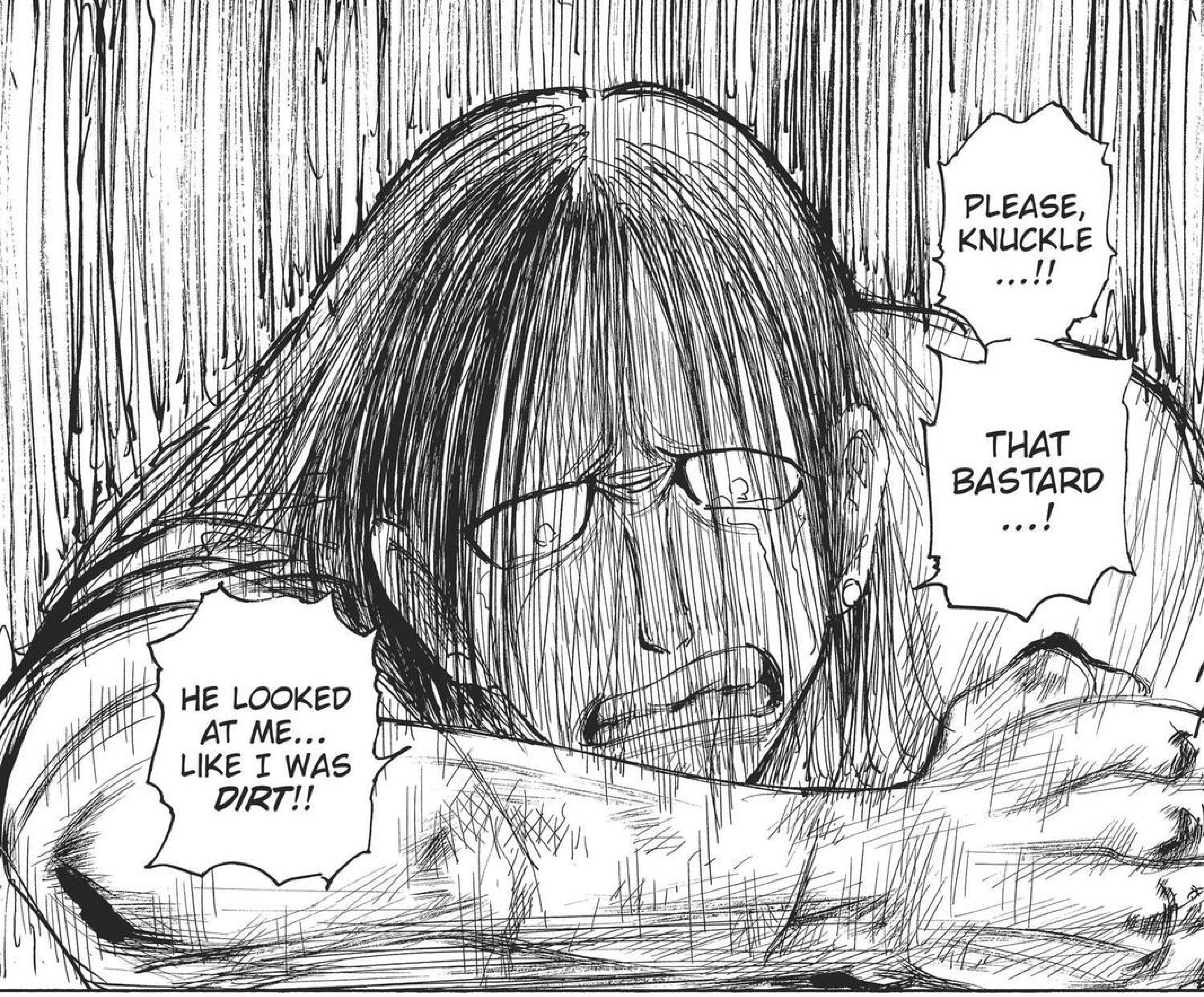

HE IMAGINED YOUPI'S EXPRESSION AS HE GLANCED UPON SHOOT AND WENT UPSTAIRS...
AND HE...
HE IGNORED HIM!!
KNUCKLE ALSO REALIZED HIS NEW ERROR.

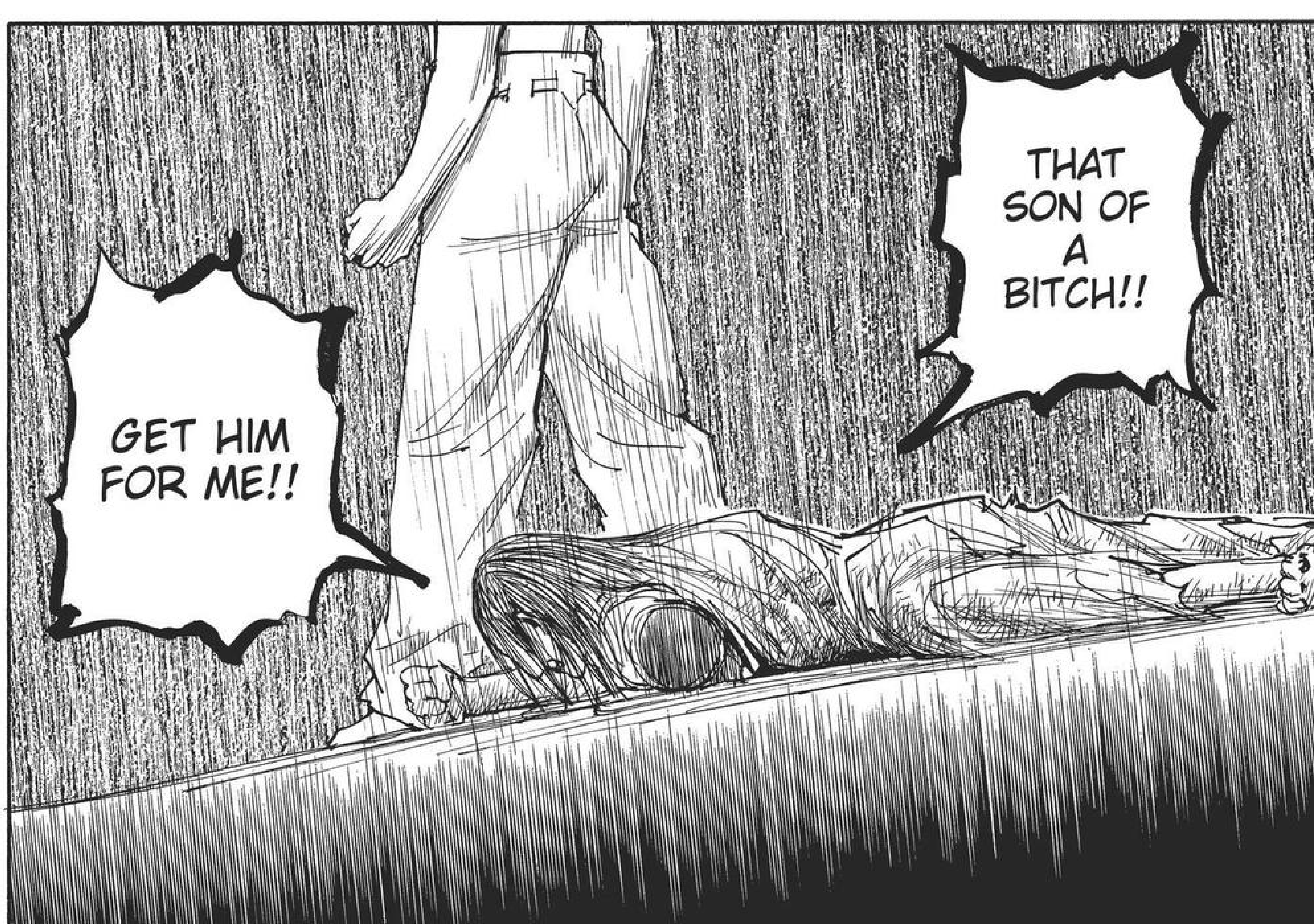

CAN I SIMPLY WALK OFF LIKE THIS...
UNH...
...AFTER MY FRIEND WAS INSULTED?!
FOR WHAT?!
DAMMIT...

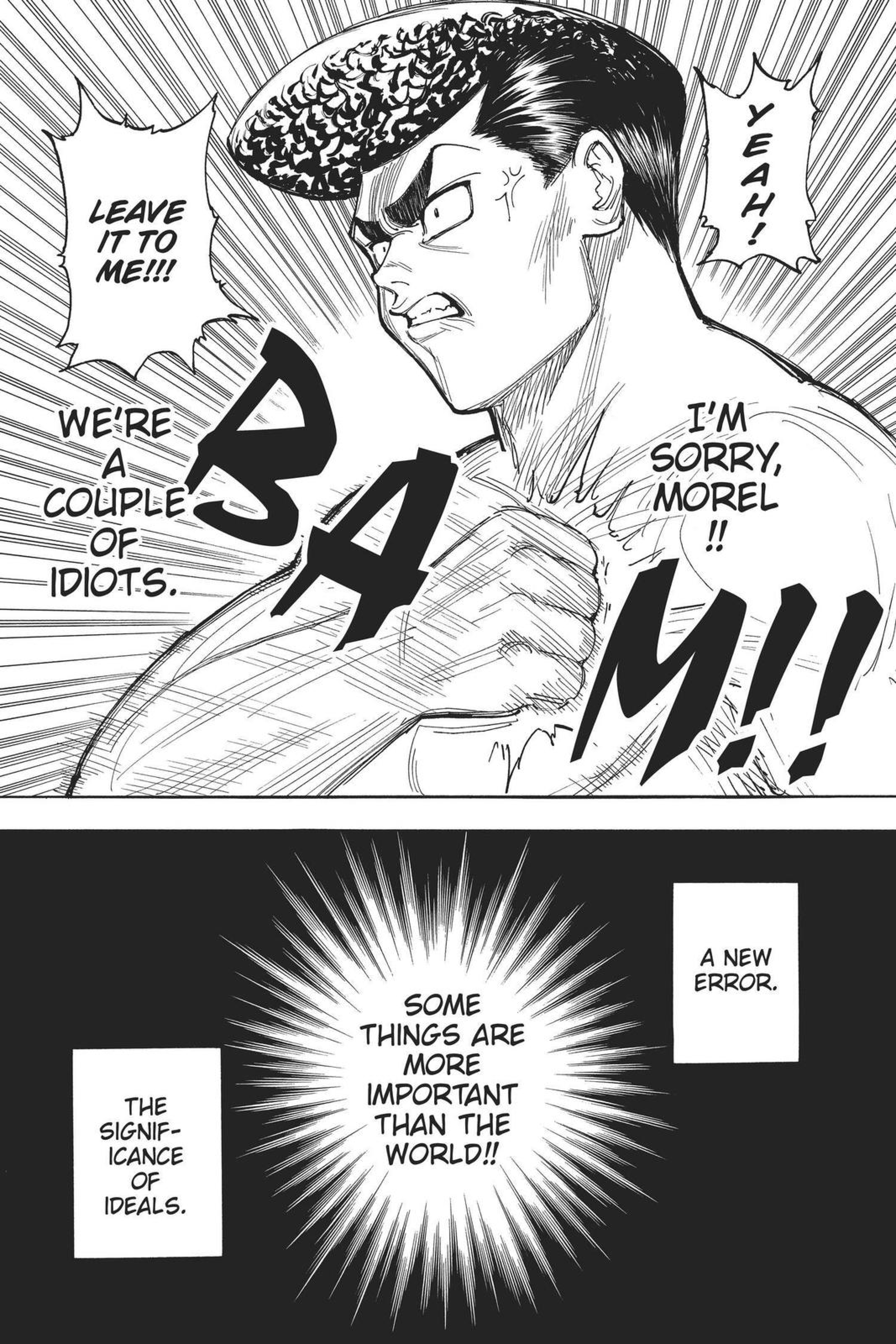

FOR THE WORLD ?!
FOR HUMANITY ?!
EVEN IF WE SUCCEED, WOULD I...
...BE ABLE TO SHAKE SHOOT'S HAND?
WOULD WE BE ABLE TO CELEBRATE...
...FOR A JOB WELL DONE?
KNOWING MY FRIEND...
...HAD BEEN INSULTED?!

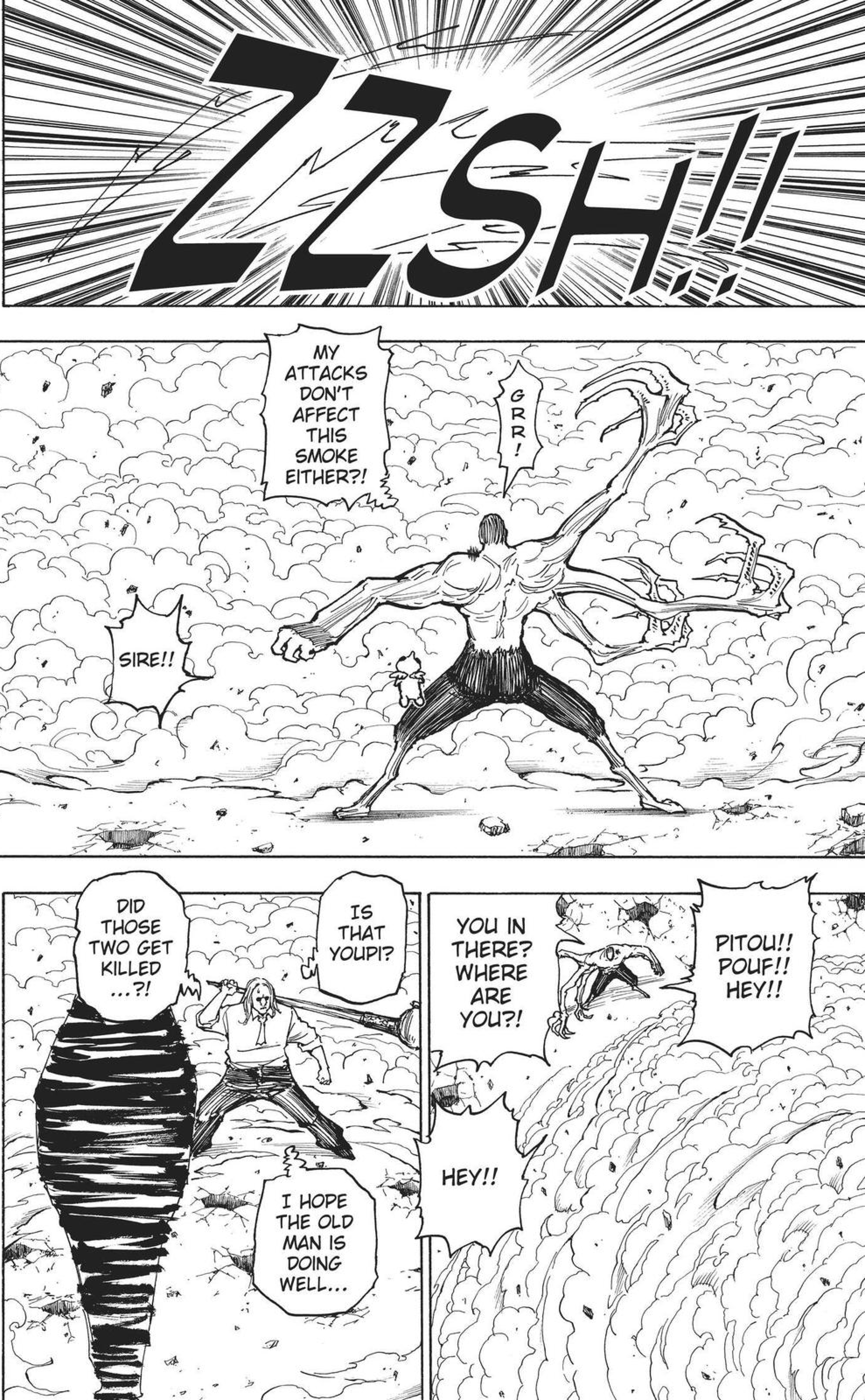

UNREAL ...
I CAN'T DO IT !!!
SPLAT

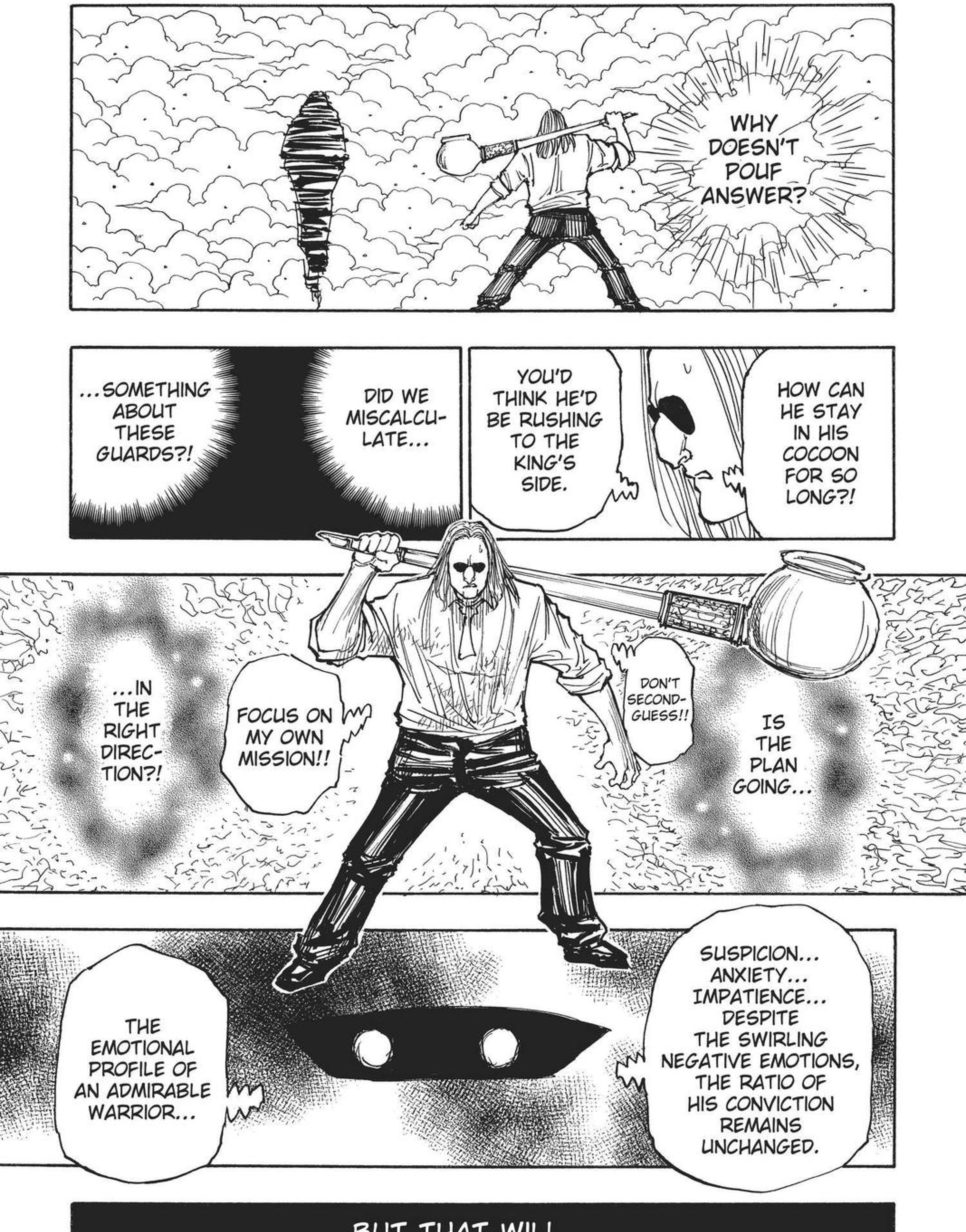

…
UM.
YOU KNOW …
OH.
SORRY.
WHILE I'M AT IT…
SORRY, BUT YOU GOTTA STAY HERE FOR A BIT LONGER.
I HAVEN'T FACED THAT BASTARD HEAD-ON YET…
…AND POUNDED HIS FACE IN.
I PROMISE I'LL LAY IN ONE…
…FROM YOU TOO!!
I KNOW I SHOULD BE TRYING TO STOP KNUCKLE …
"ARE YOU CRAZY?! JUST BUY TIME…"
THAT'S WHAT I SHOULD SAY…!

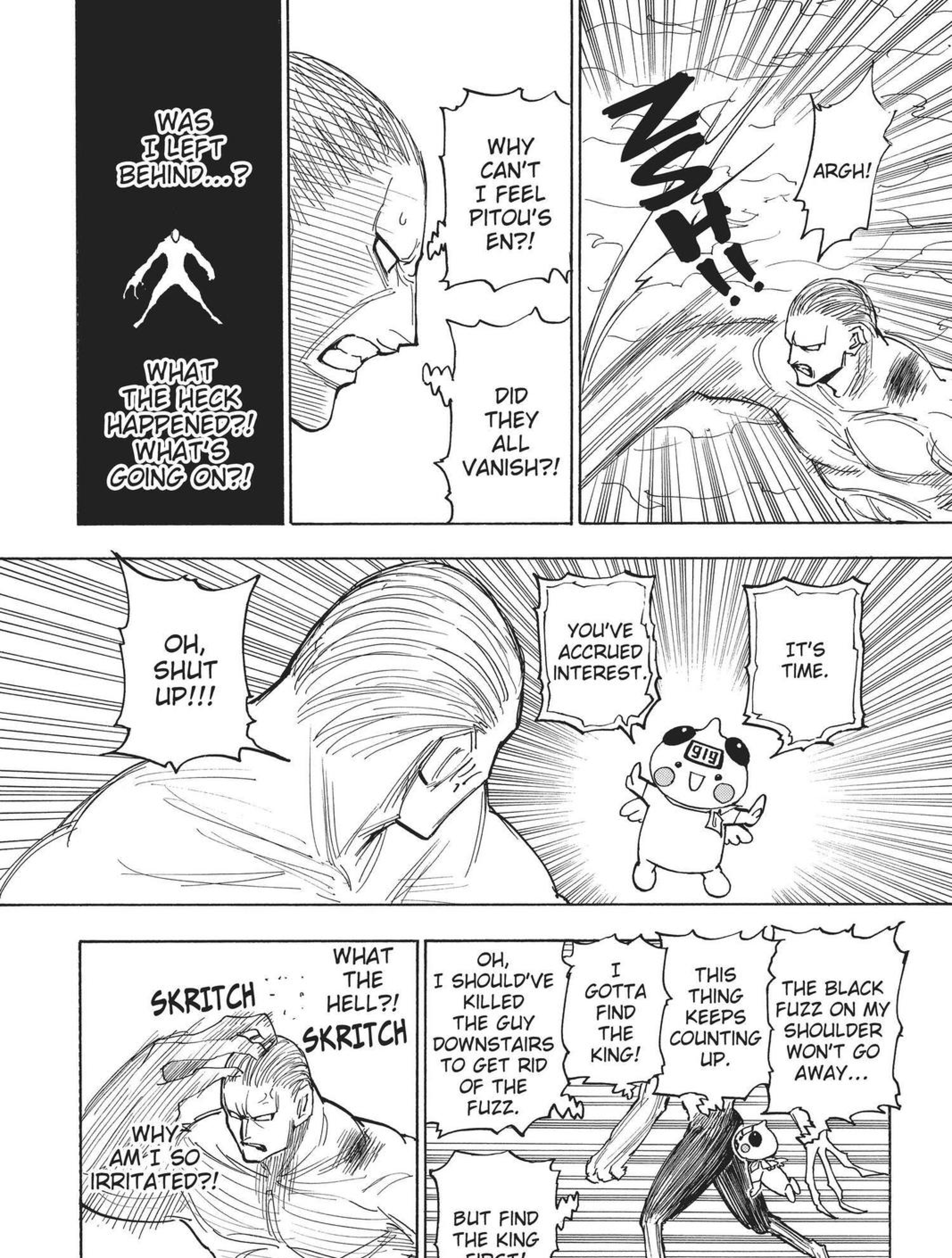

PLEASE, KNUCKLE ...!!
THAT BASTARD ...!
HE LOOKED AT ME... LIKE I WAS *DIRT*!!

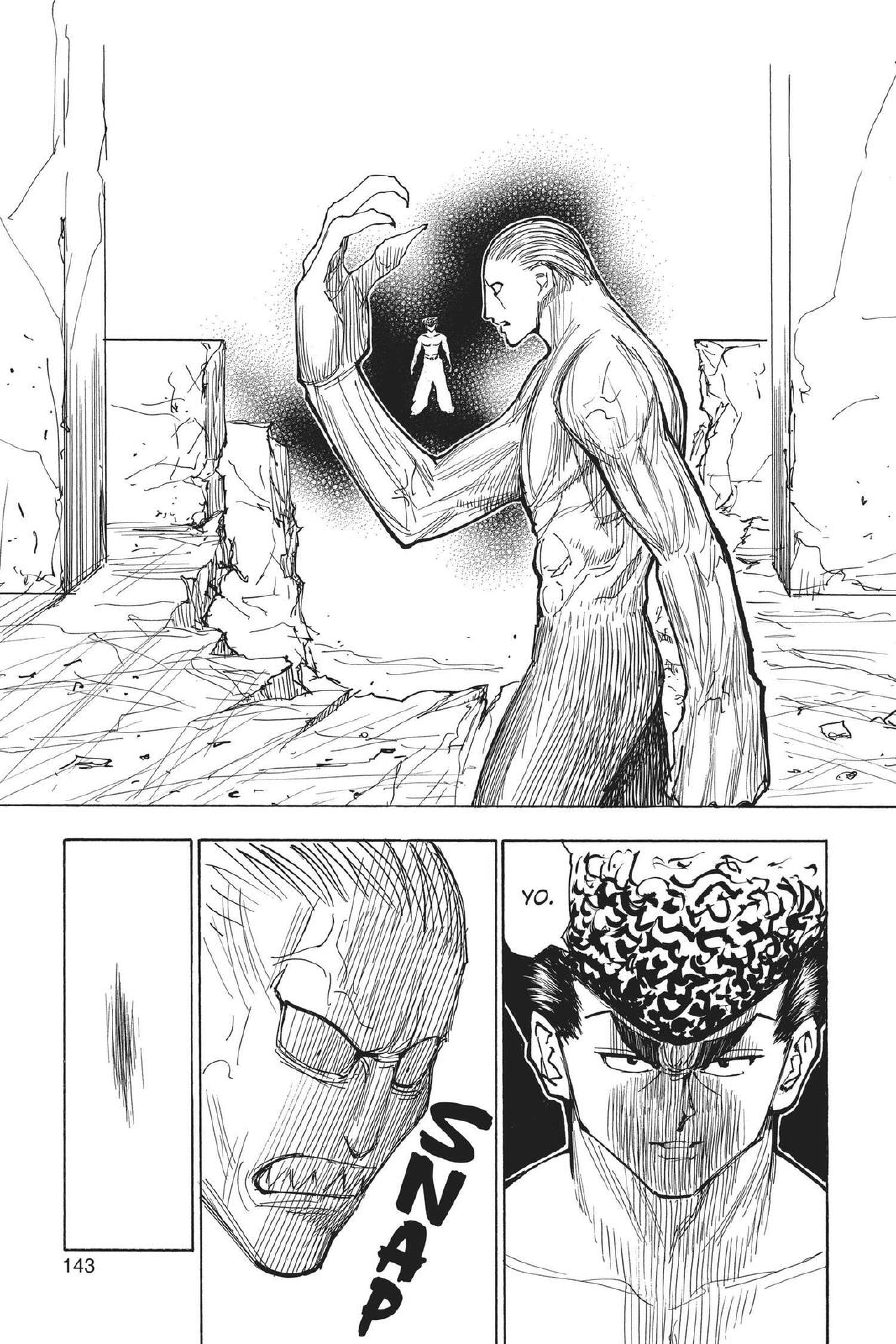

THAT SON OF A BITCH!!
GET HIM FOR ME!!

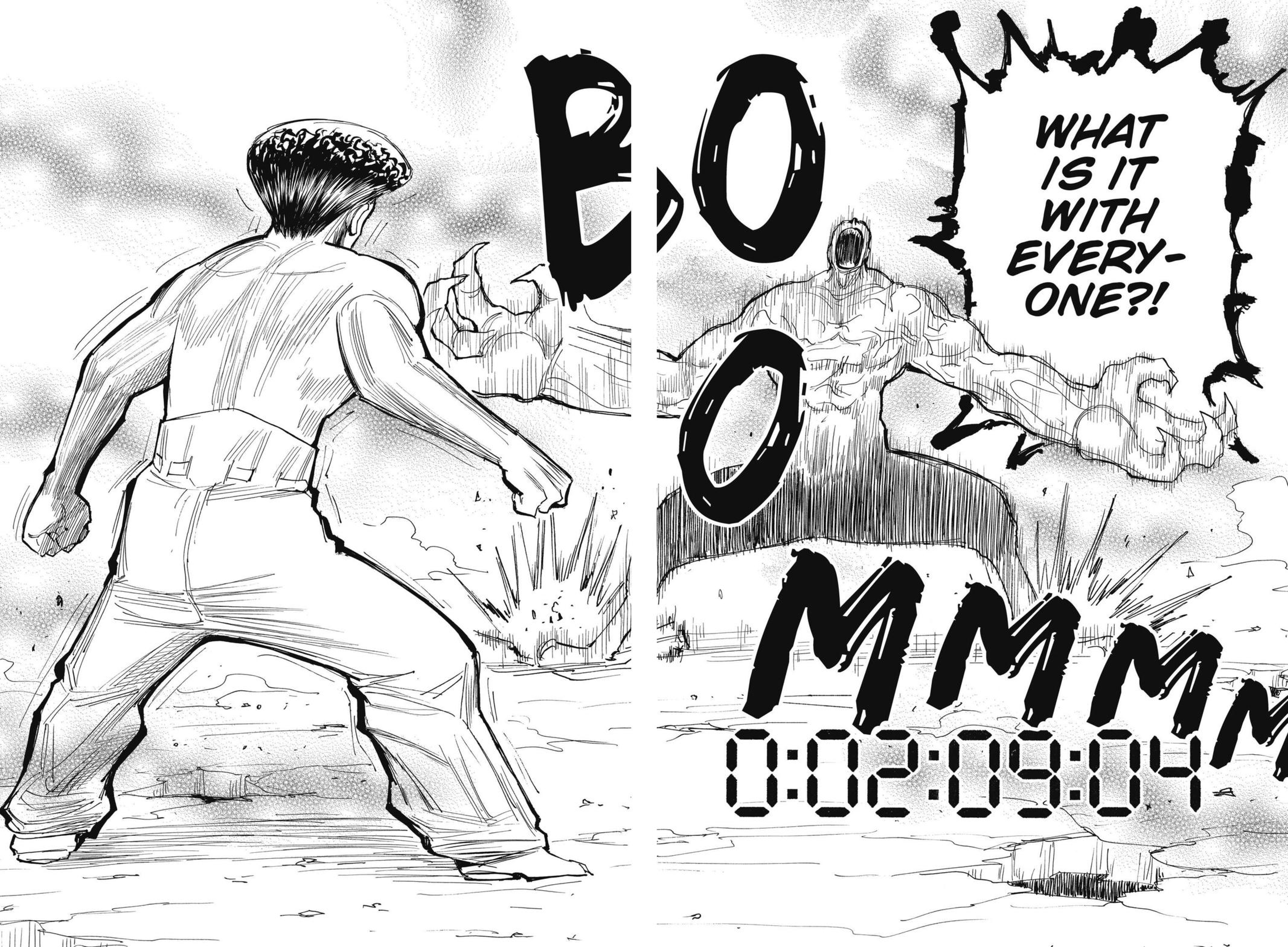

YEAH!
LEAVE IT TO ME!!!
I'M SORRY, MOREL!!
WE'RE A COUPLE OF IDIOTS.
BAM!!
A NEW ERROR.
SOME THINGS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WORLD!!
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IDEALS.

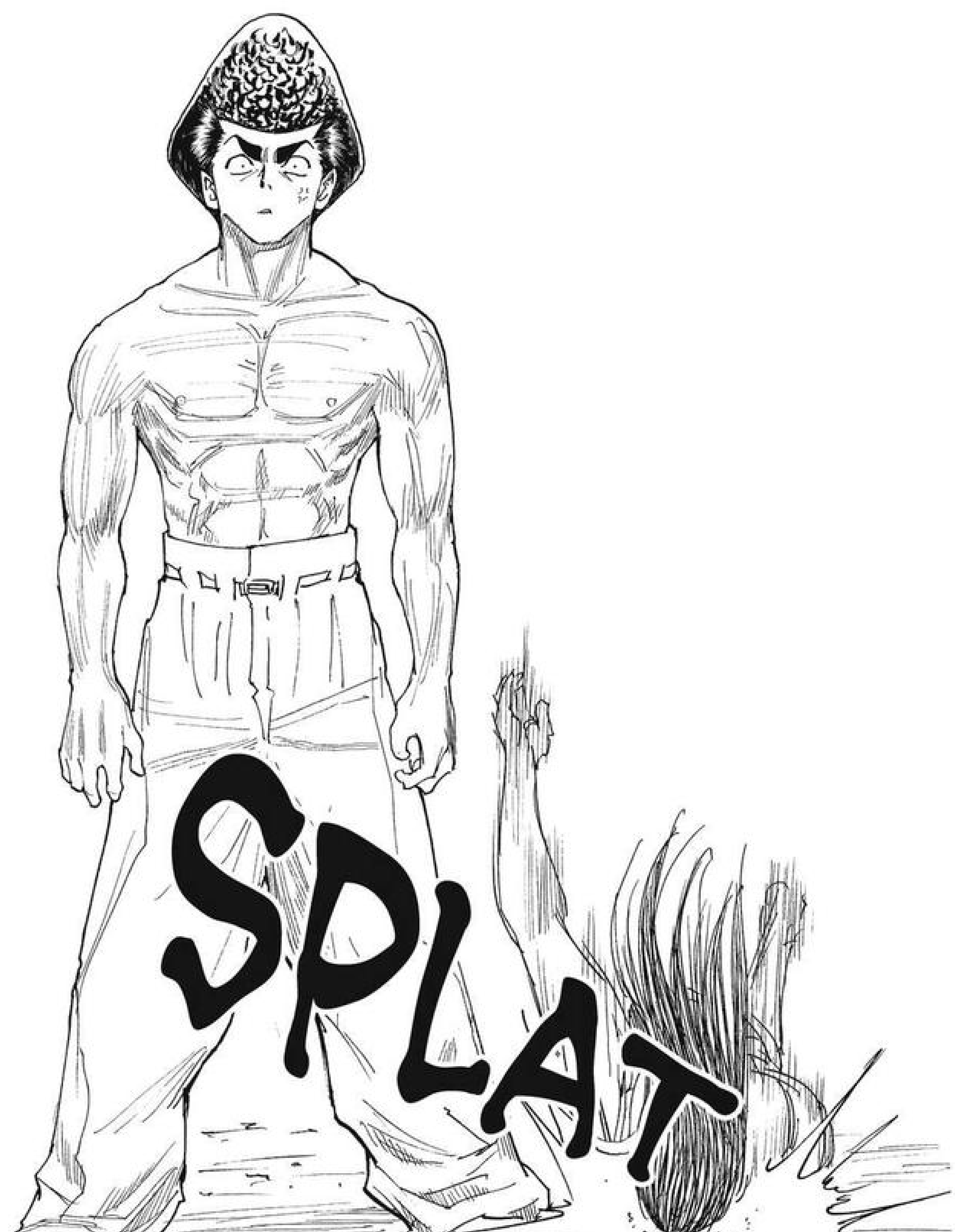

ZZSH!!
GRR!
MY ATTACKS DON'T AFFECT THIS SMOKE EITHER?!
SIRE!!
PITOU!! POUF!! HEY!!
YOU IN THERE? WHERE ARE YOU?!
HEY!!
IS THAT YOUPI?
DID THOSE TWO GET KILLED…?!
I HOPE THE OLD MAN IS DOING WELL…


WHY DOESN'T POUF ANSWER?
HOW CAN HE STAY IN HIS COCOON FOR SO LONG?!
YOU'D THINK HE'D BE RUSHING TO THE KING'S SIDE.
DID WE MISCALCULATE...
...SOMETHING ABOUT THESE GUARDS?!
IS THE PLAN GOING...
DON'T SECOND-GUESS!!
FOCUS ON MY OWN MISSION!!
...IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?!
SUSPICION... ANXIETY... IMPATIENCE... DESPITE THE SWIRLING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, THE RATIO OF HIS CONVICTION REMAINS UNCHANGED.
THE EMOTIONAL PROFILE OF AN ADMIRABLE WARRIOR...
BUT THAT WILL INHIBIT YOUR DECISION MAKING...

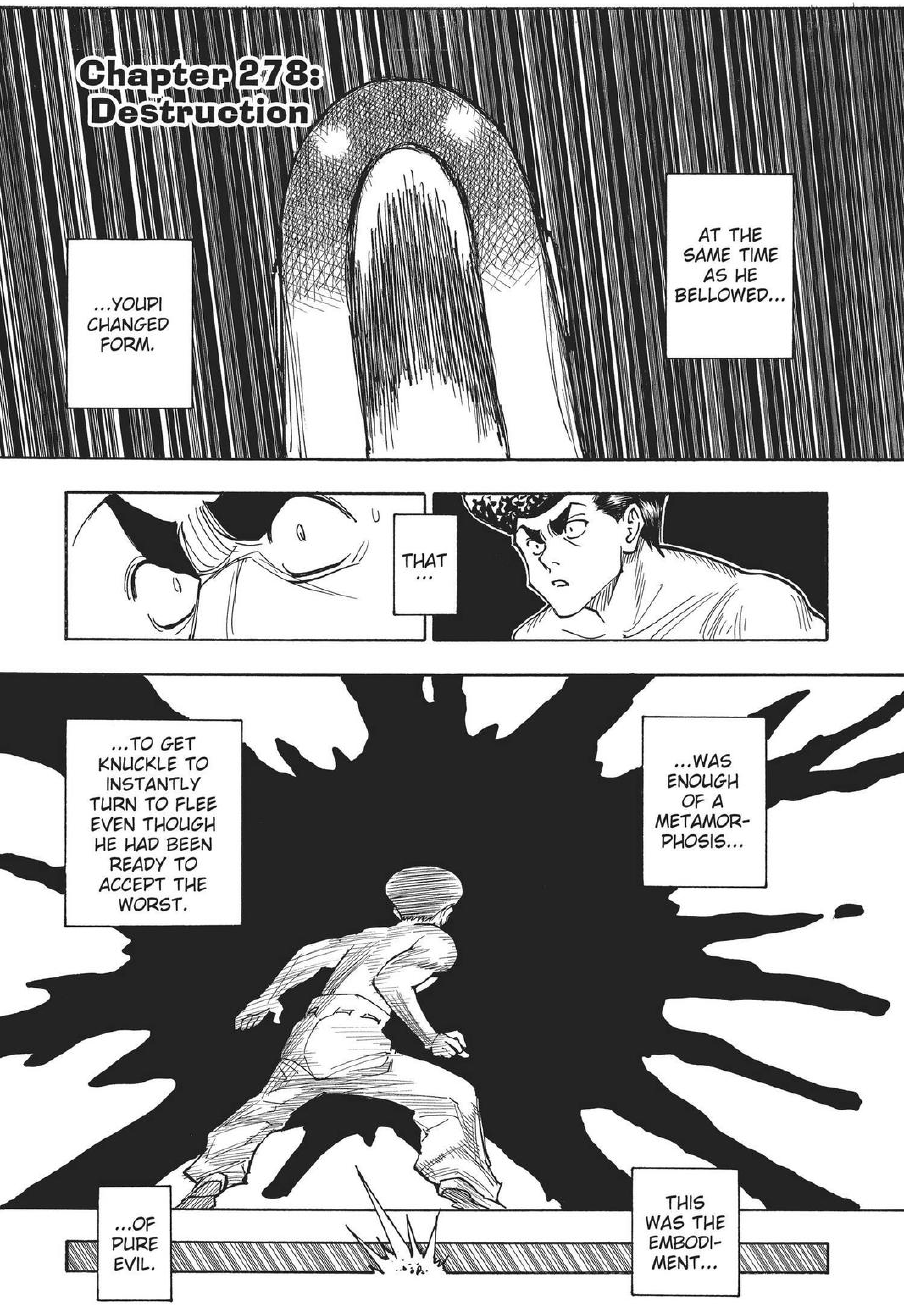

NSH!!
ARGH!
WHY CAN'T I FEEL PITOU'S EN?!
DID THEY ALL VANISH?!
WAS I LEFT BEHIND...?
WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
IT'S TIME.
YOU'VE ACCRUED INTEREST.
GIG
OH, SHUT UP!!!
THE BLACK FUZZ ON MY SHOULDER WON'T GO AWAY...
THIS THING KEEPS COUNTING UP.
I GOTTA FIND THE KING!
OH, I SHOULD'VE KILLED THE GUY DOWNSTAIRS TO GET RID OF THE FUZZ.
BUT FIND THE KING FIRST!
WHAT THE HELL?!
SKRITCH
SKRITCH
WHY AM I SO IRRITATED?!

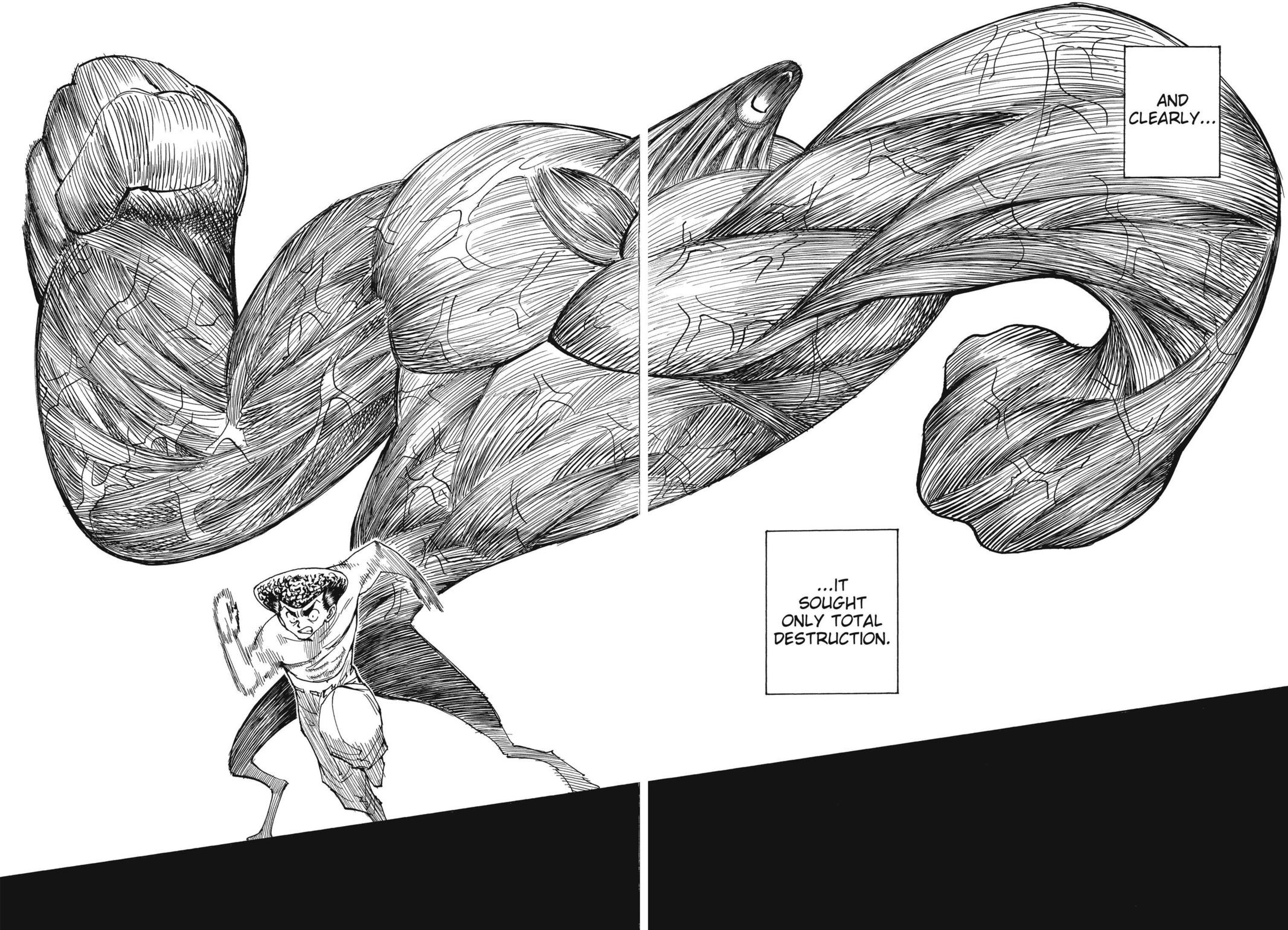

YO.
SNAP

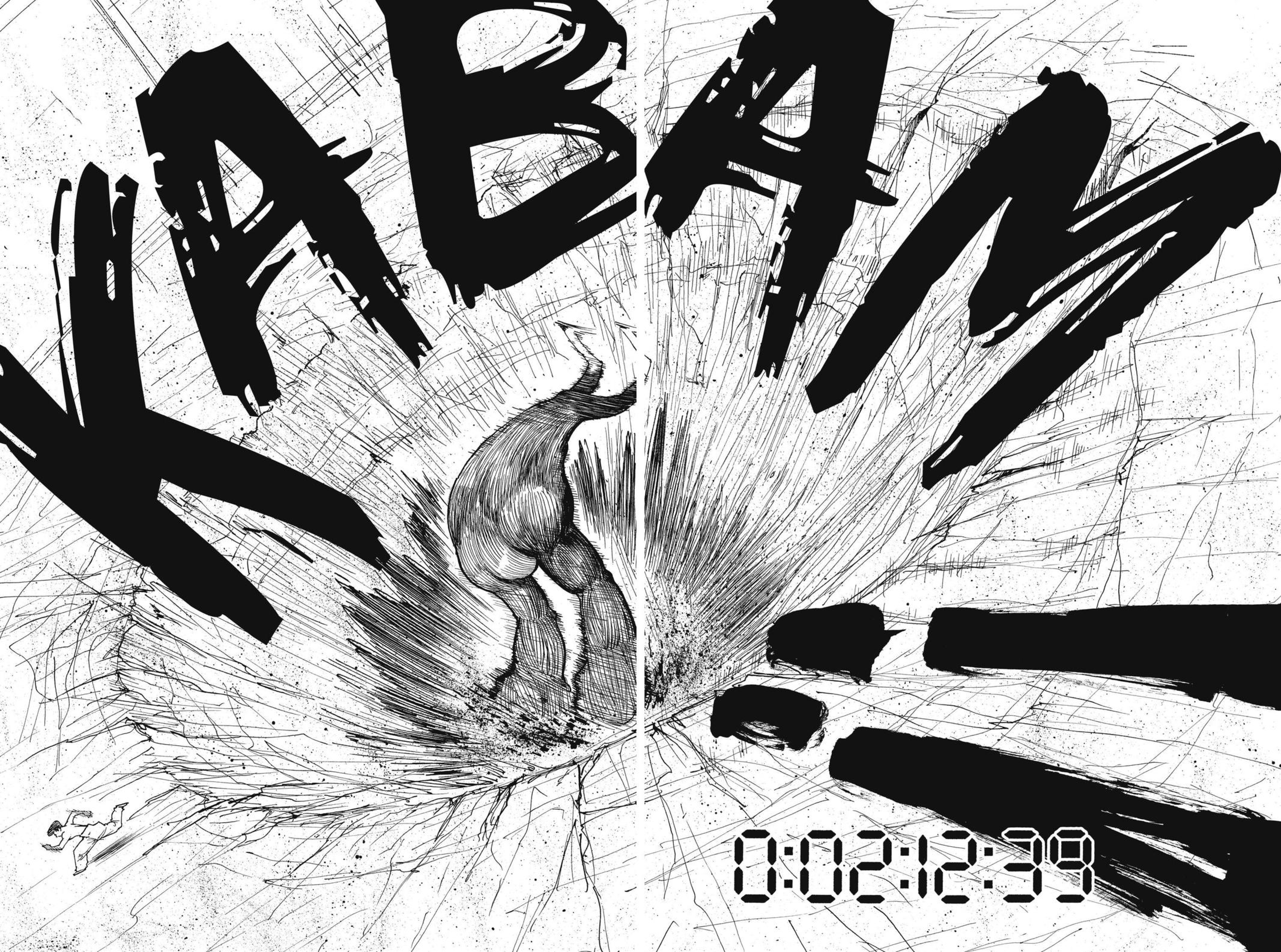

WHAT IS IT WITH EVERYONE?!
BOOOMMMM
0:02:09:04

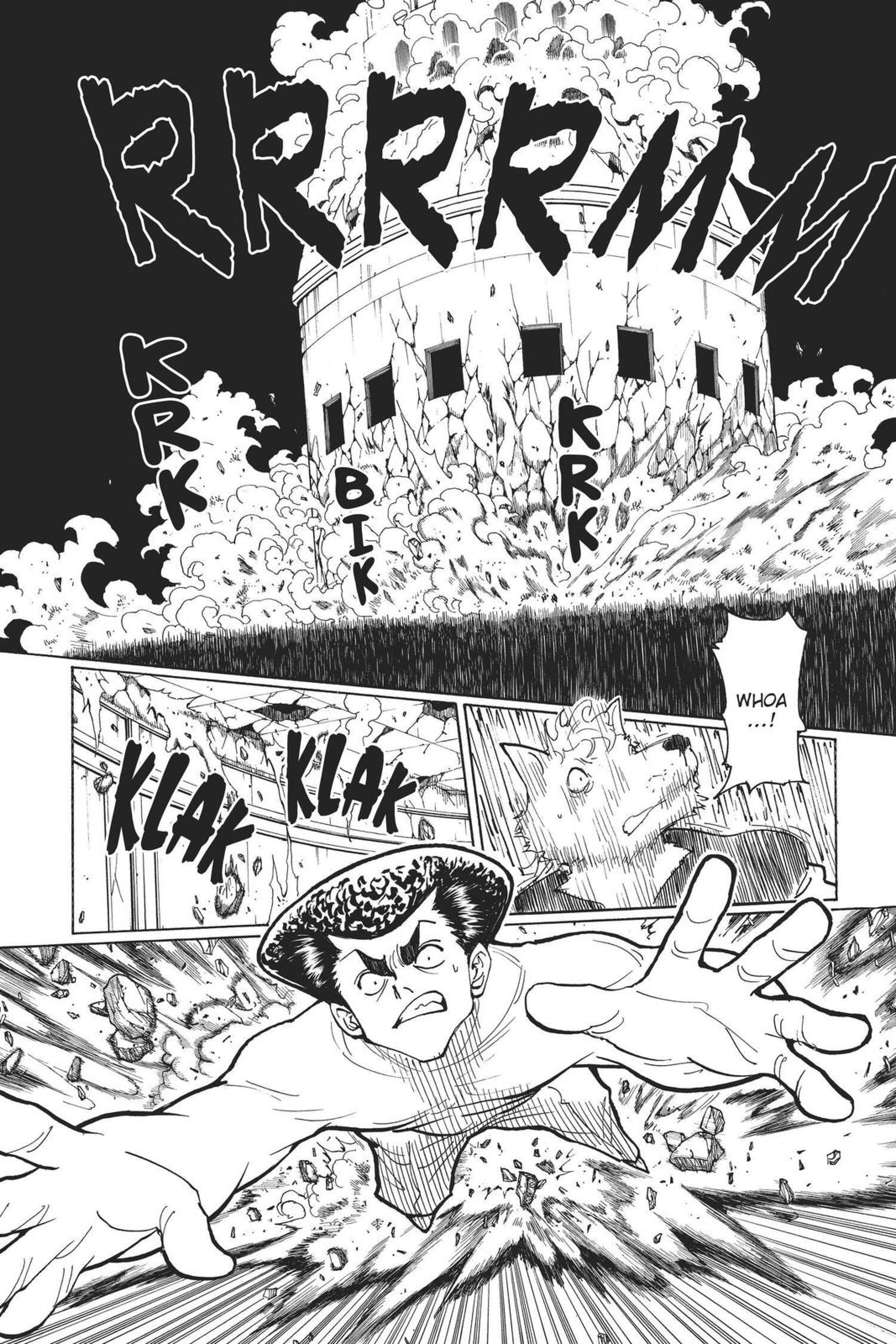

SPLAT

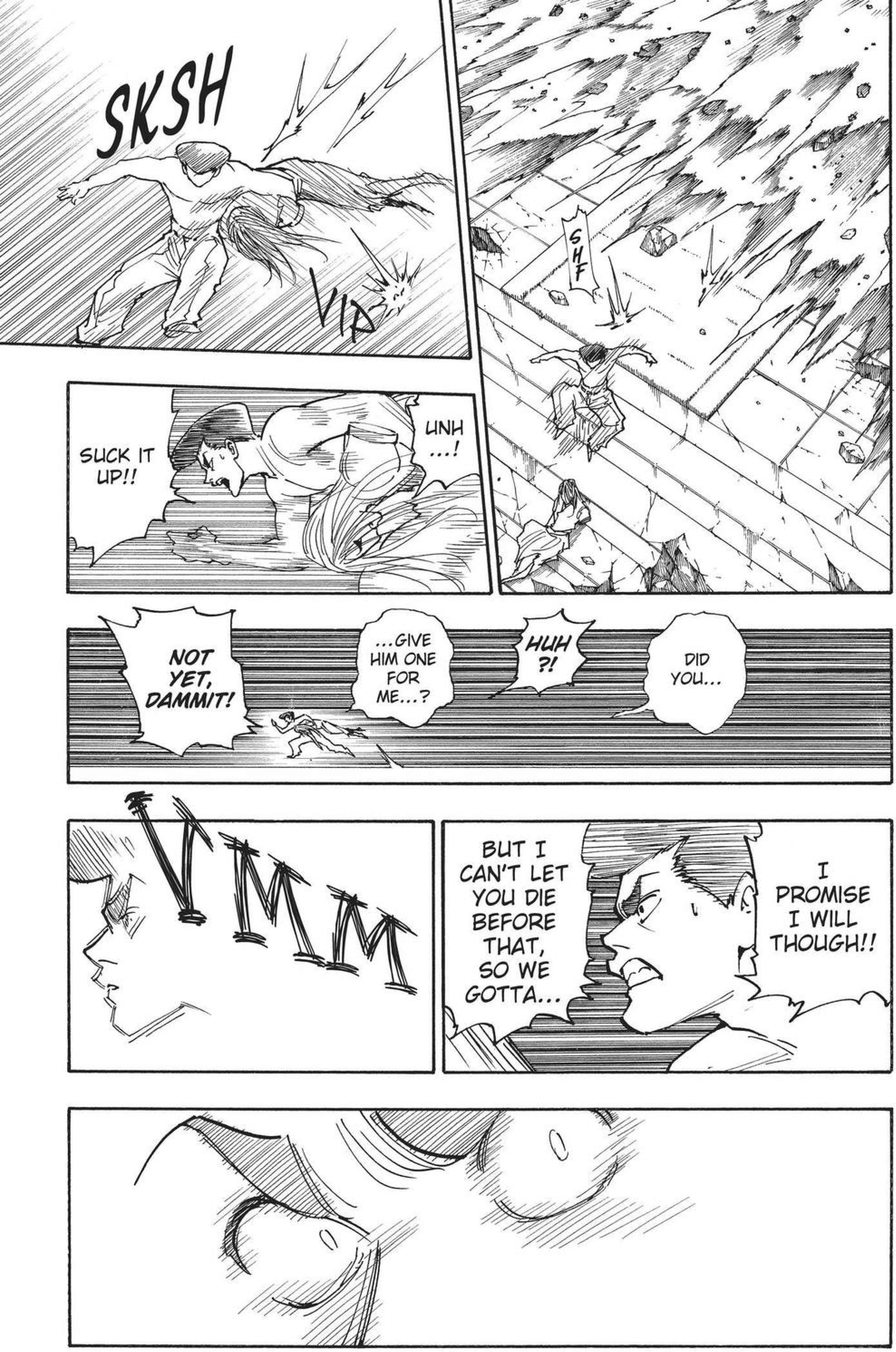
Chapter 278: Destruction

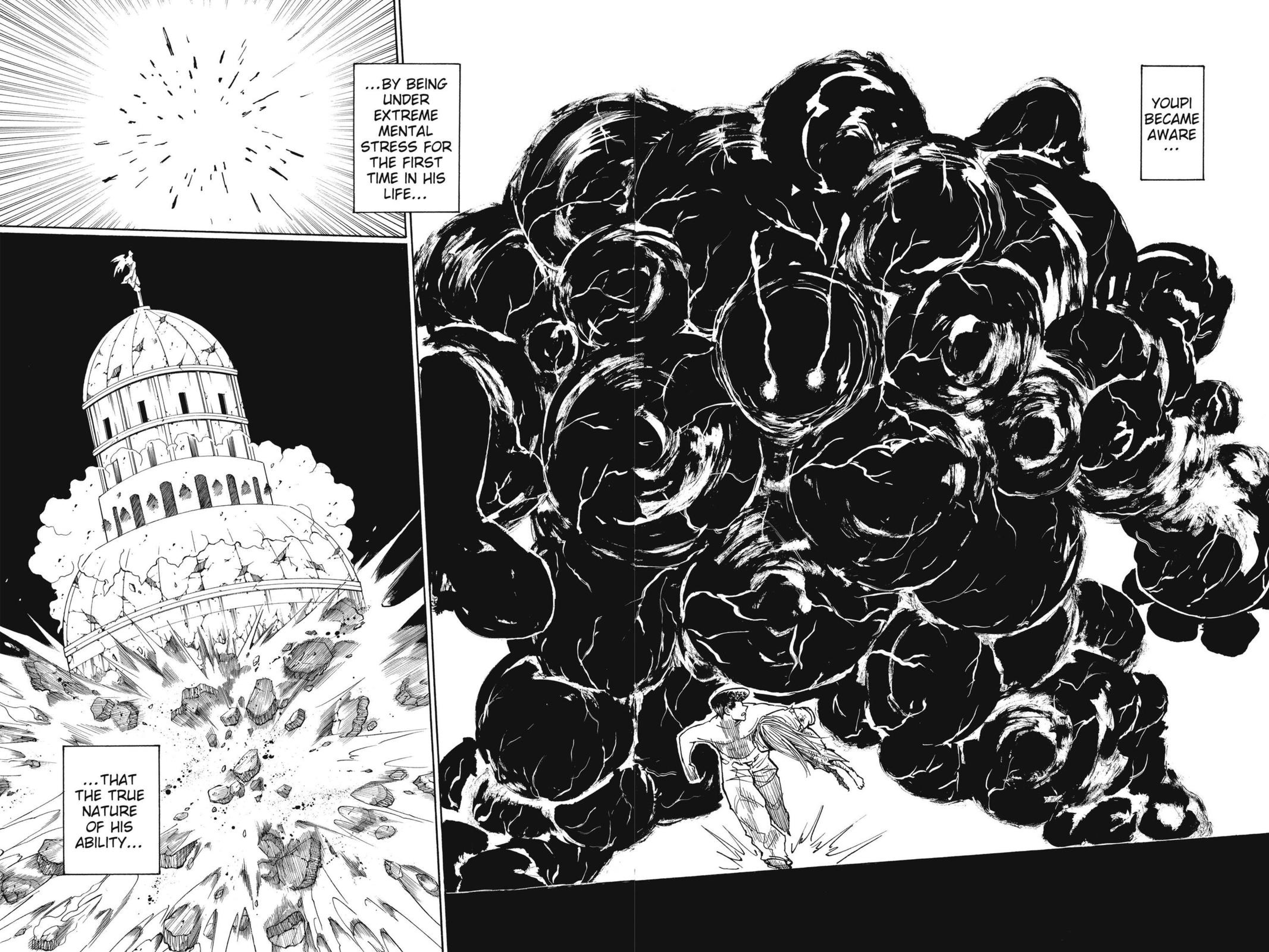

AT THE SAME TIME AS HE BELLOWED...
...YOUPI CHANGED FORM.
THAT ...
...WAS ENOUGH OF A METAMORPHOSIS...
...TO GET KNUCKLE TO INSTANTLY TURN TO FLEE EVEN THOUGH HE HAD BEEN READY TO ACCEPT THE WORST.
THIS WAS THE EMBODIMENT...
...OF PURE EVIL.

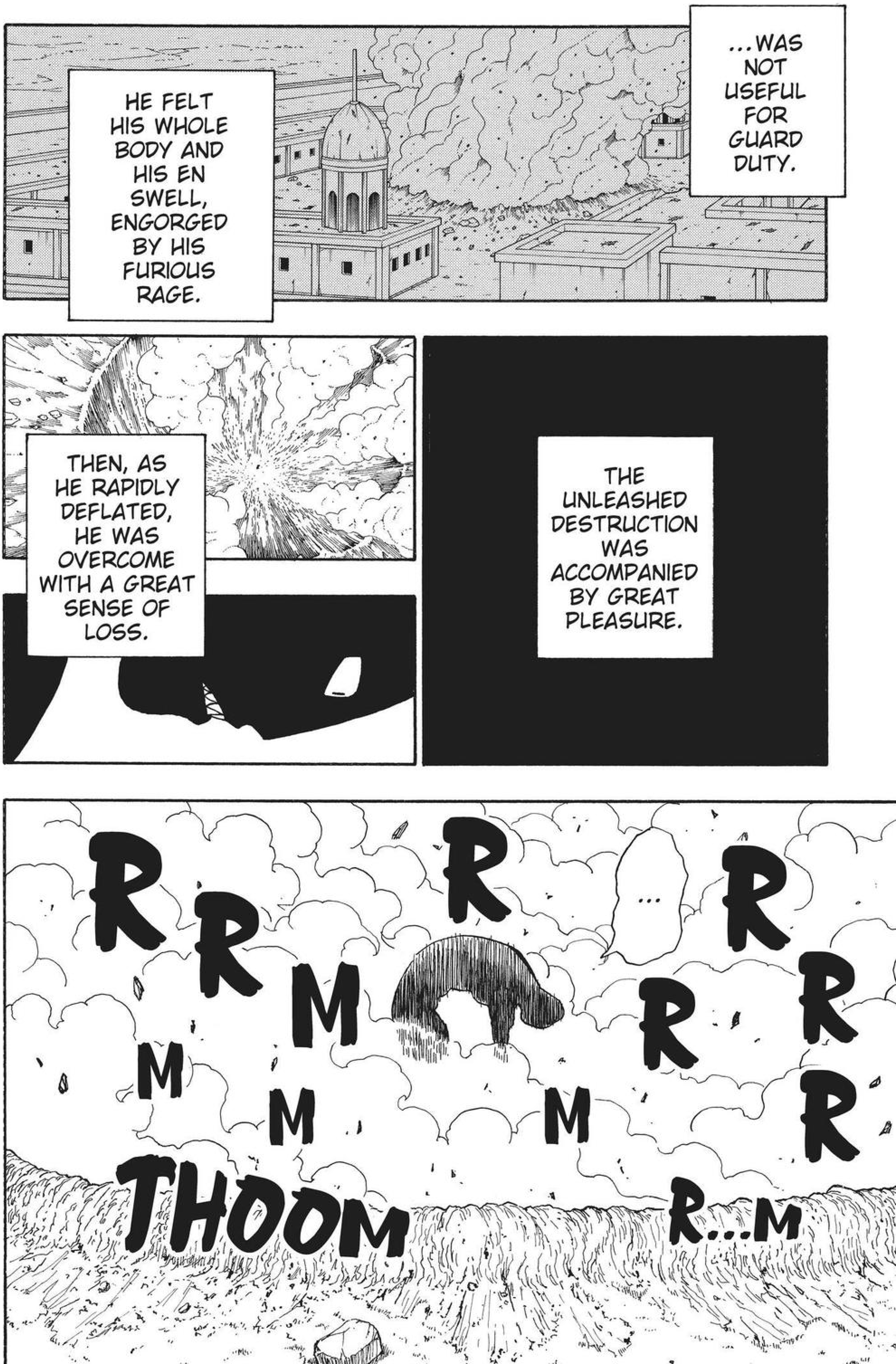

AND CLEARLY...
...IT SOUGHT ONLY TOTAL DESTRUCTION.

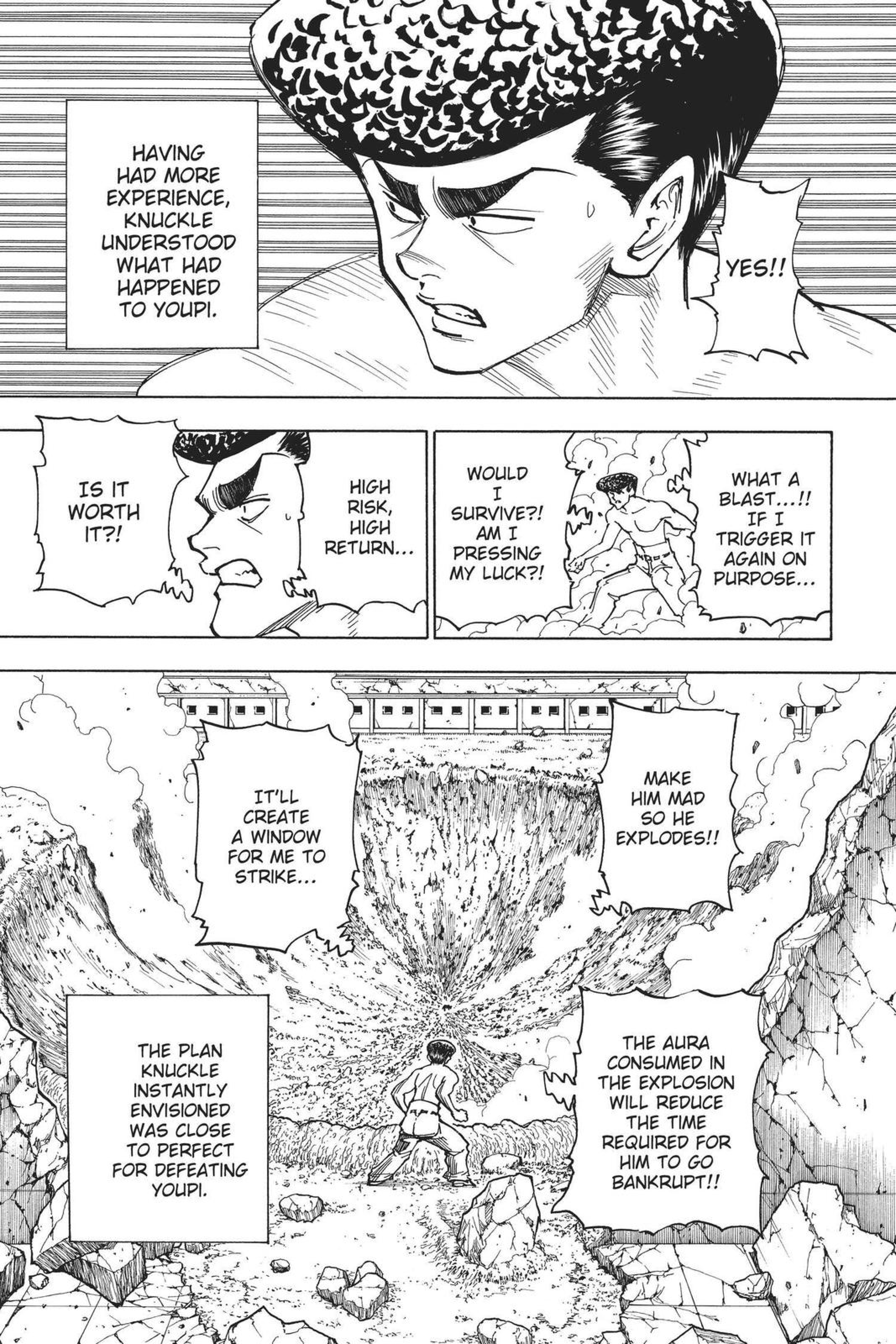

KABAM!!
0:02:12:39

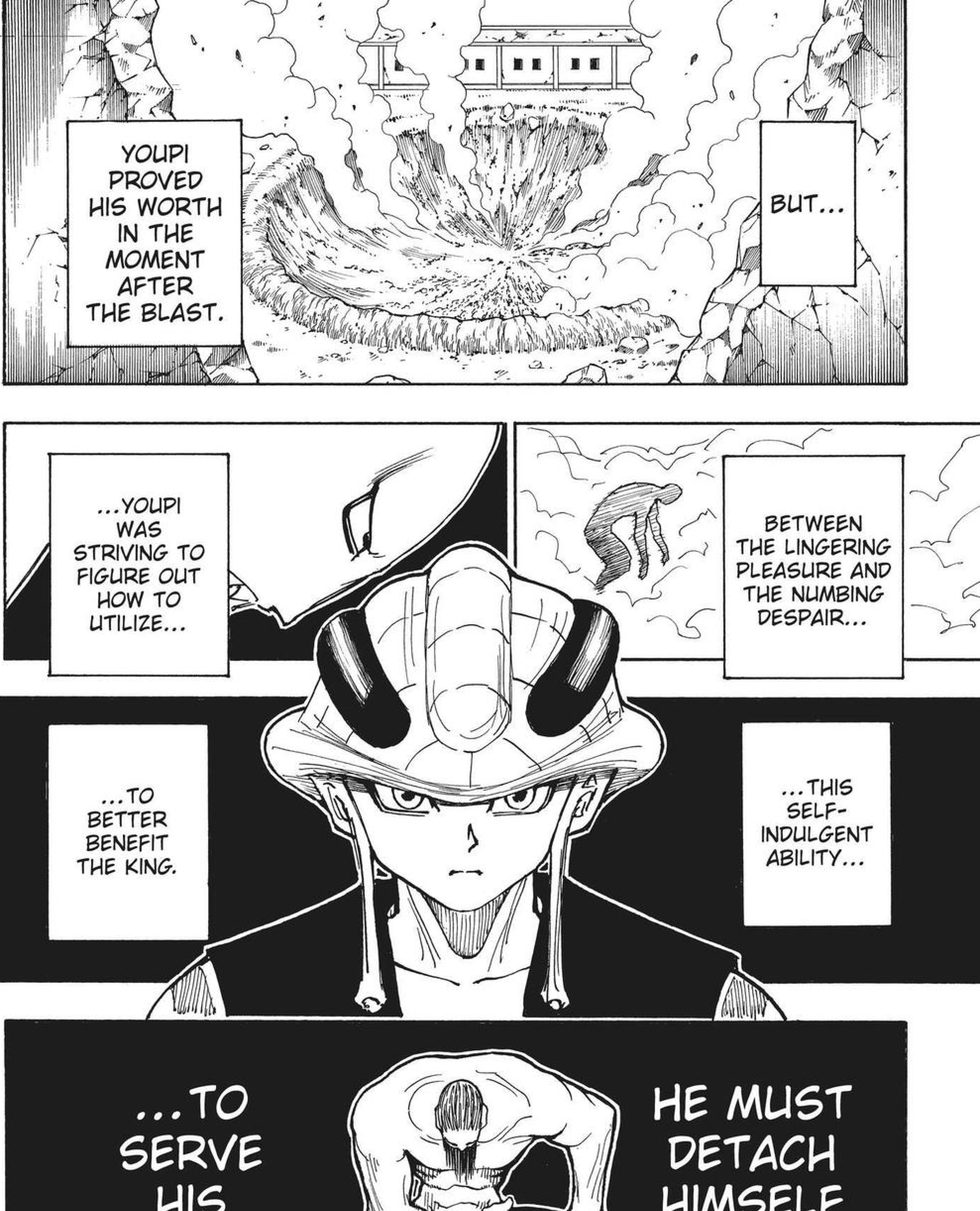

RRRRMM
KRK
BIK
KRK
WHOA ...!
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

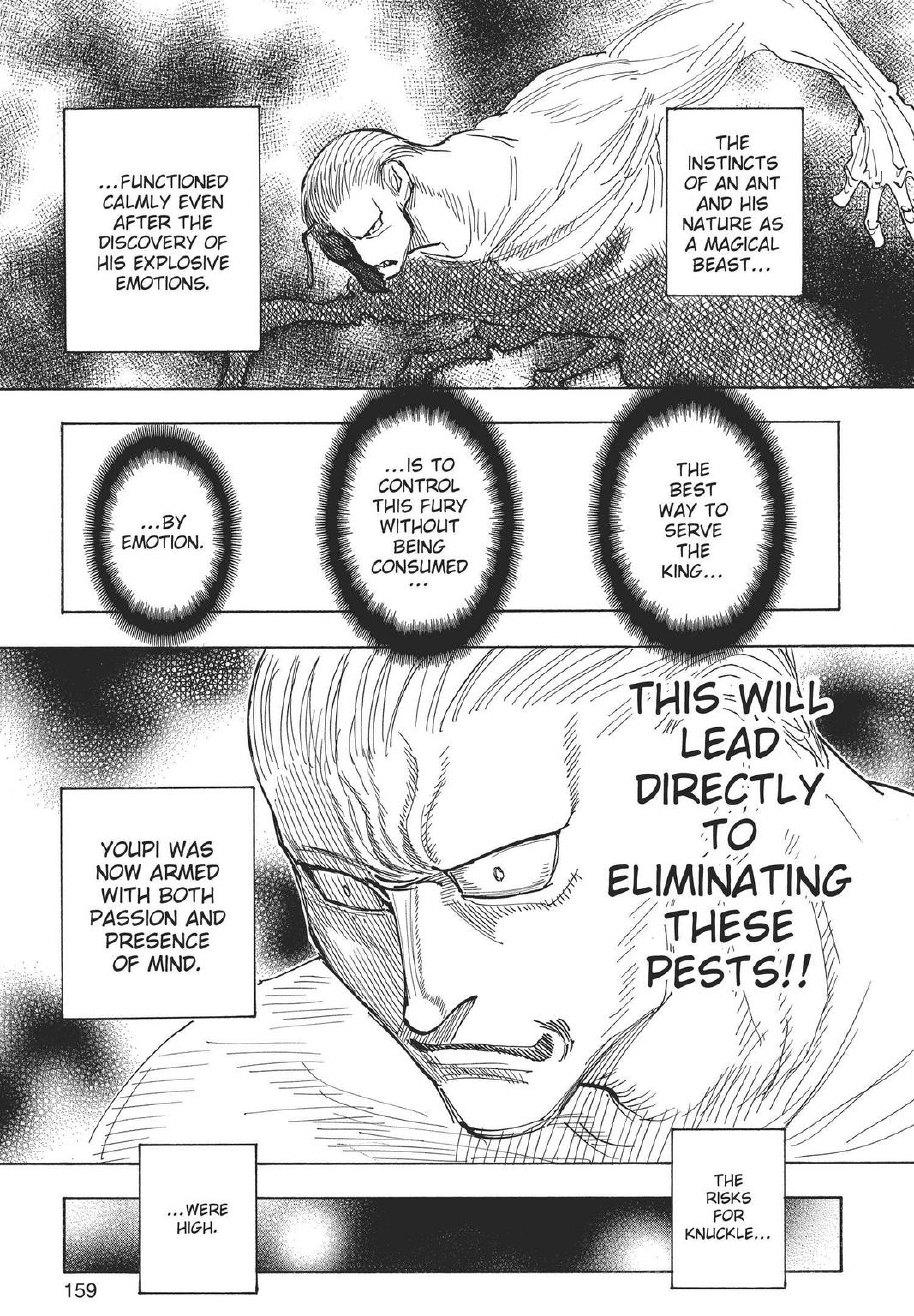

SHF
SKSH
VIP
UNH…!
SUCK IT UP!!
DID YOU…
HUH?!
…GIVE HIM ONE FOR ME…?
NOT YET, DAMMIT!
I PROMISE I WILL THOUGH!!
BUT I CAN'T LET YOU DIE BEFORE THAT, SO WE GOTTA…
VMM

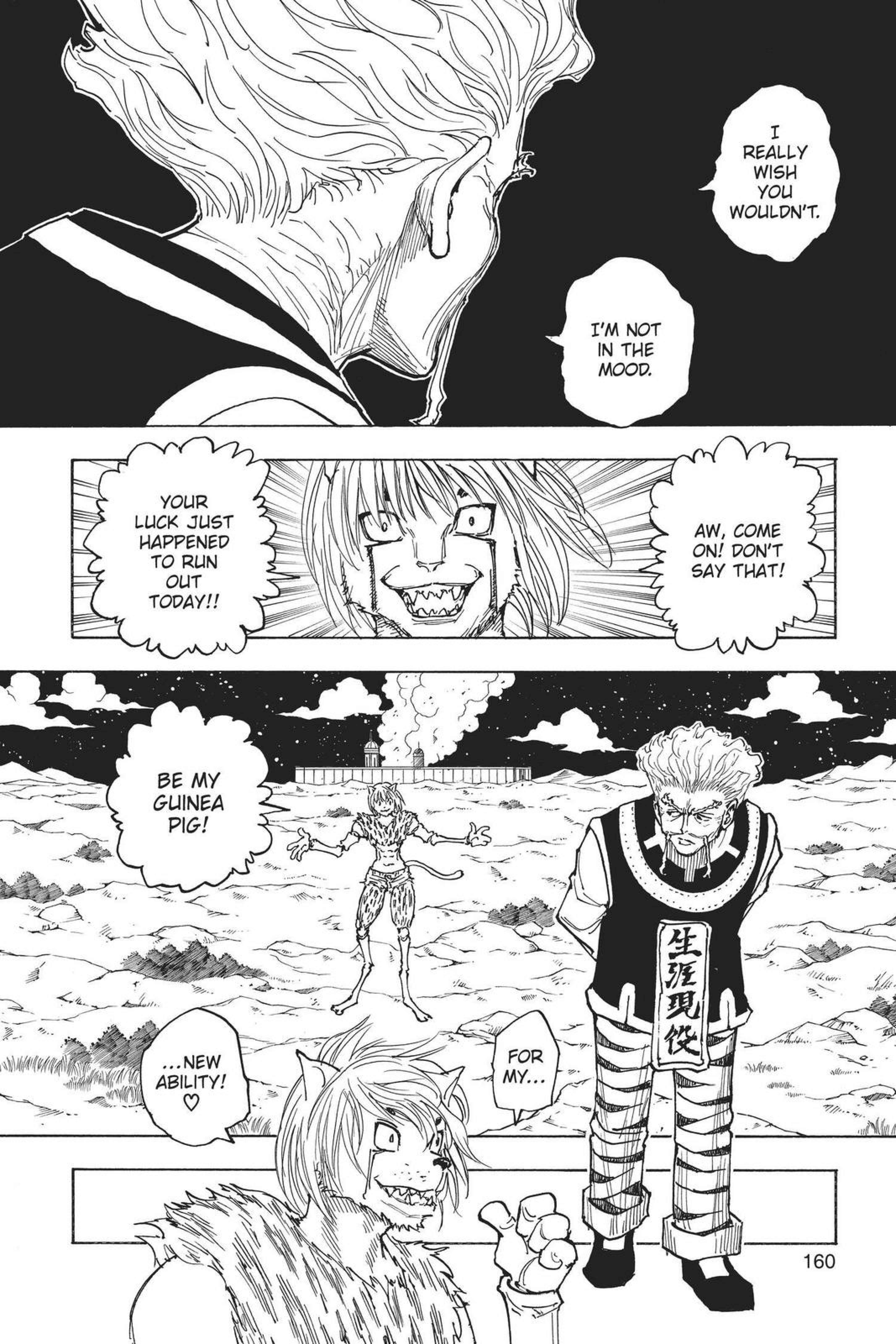

YOUPI BECAME AWARE ...
...BY BEING UNDER EXTREME MENTAL STRESS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE...
...THAT THE TRUE NATURE OF HIS ABILITY...

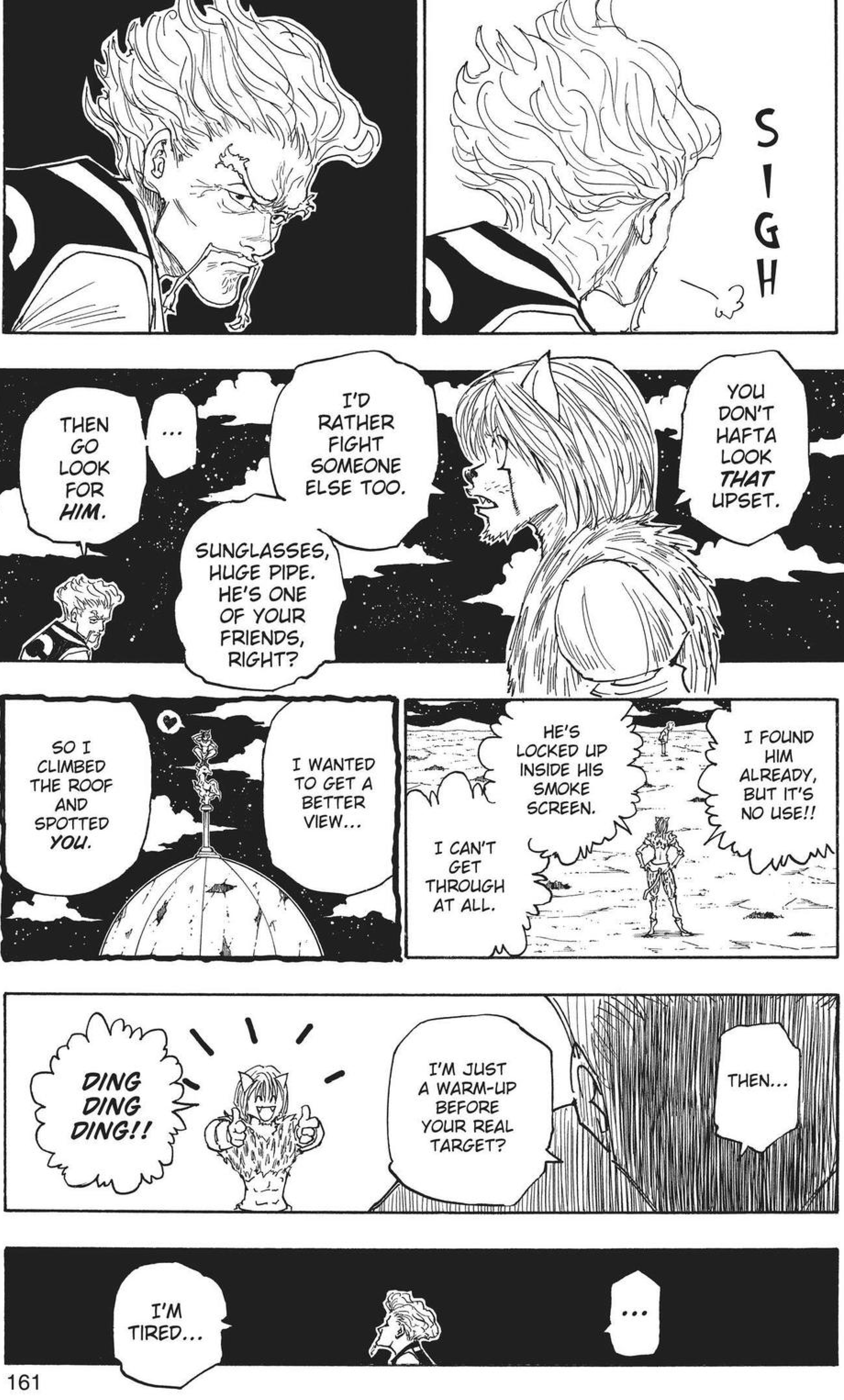

...WAS NOT USEFUL FOR GUARD DUTY.
HE FELT HIS WHOLE BODY AND HIS EN SWELL, ENGORGED BY HIS FURIOUS RAGE.
THE UNLEASHED DESTRUCTION WAS ACCOMPANIED BY GREAT PLEASURE.
THEN, AS HE RAPIDLY DEFLATED, HE WAS OVERCOME WITH A GREAT SENSE OF LOSS.
RRRR
...
RRMMM
RRMMM
THOOM
R...M

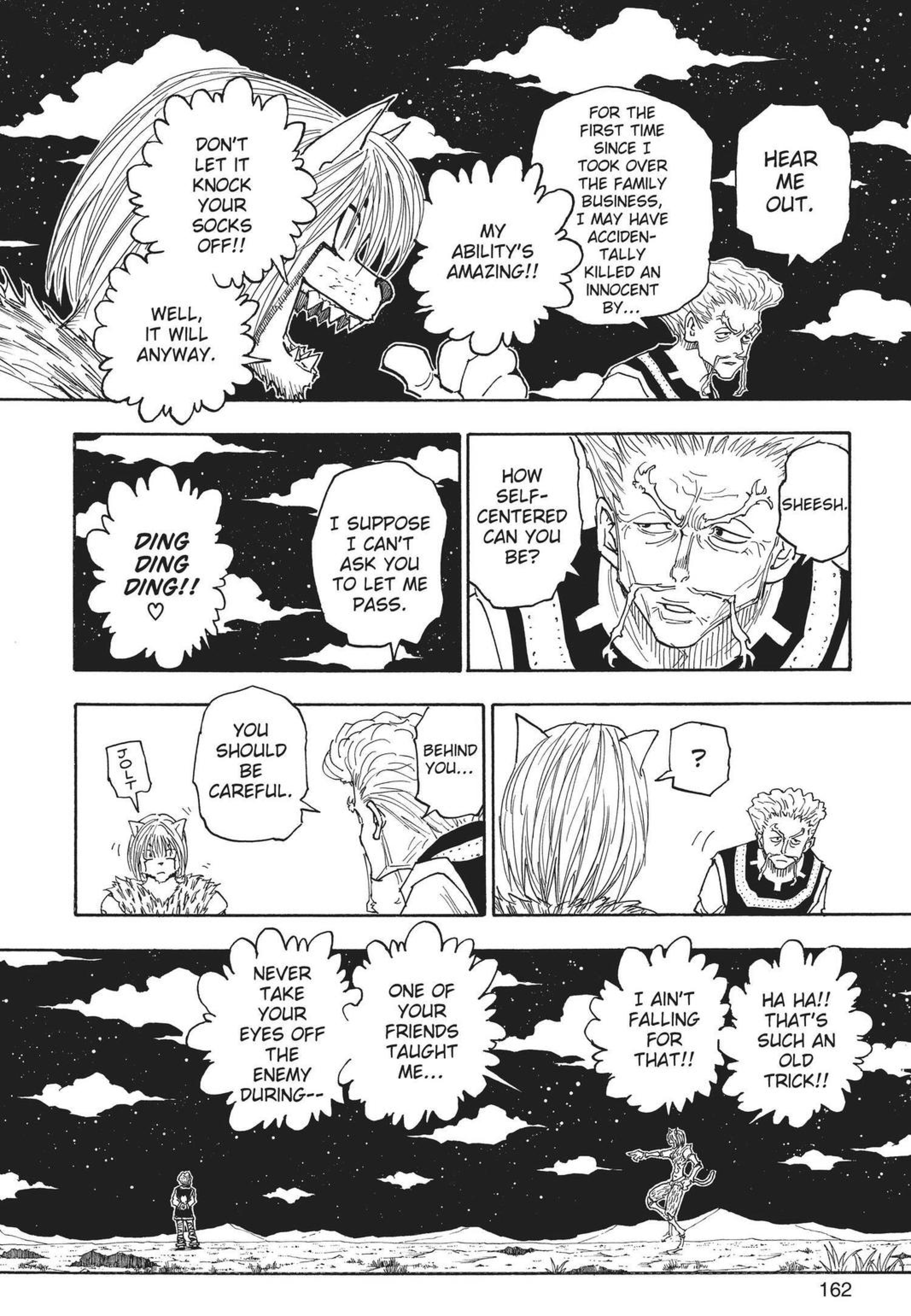

YES!!
HAVING HAD MORE EXPERIENCE, KNUCKLE UNDERSTOOD WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO YOUPI.
WHAT A BLAST…!! IF I TRIGGER IT AGAIN ON PURPOSE…
WOULD I SURVIVE?! AM I PRESSING MY LUCK?!
HIGH RISK, HIGH RETURN…
IS IT WORTH IT?!
MAKE HIM MAD SO HE EXPLODES!!
IT'LL CREATE A WINDOW FOR ME TO STRIKE…
THE AURA CONSUMED IN THE EXPLOSION WILL REDUCE THE TIME REQUIRED FOR HIM TO GO BANKRUPT!!
THE PLAN KNUCKLE INSTANTLY ENVISIONED WAS CLOSE TO PERFECT FOR DEFEATING YOUPI.

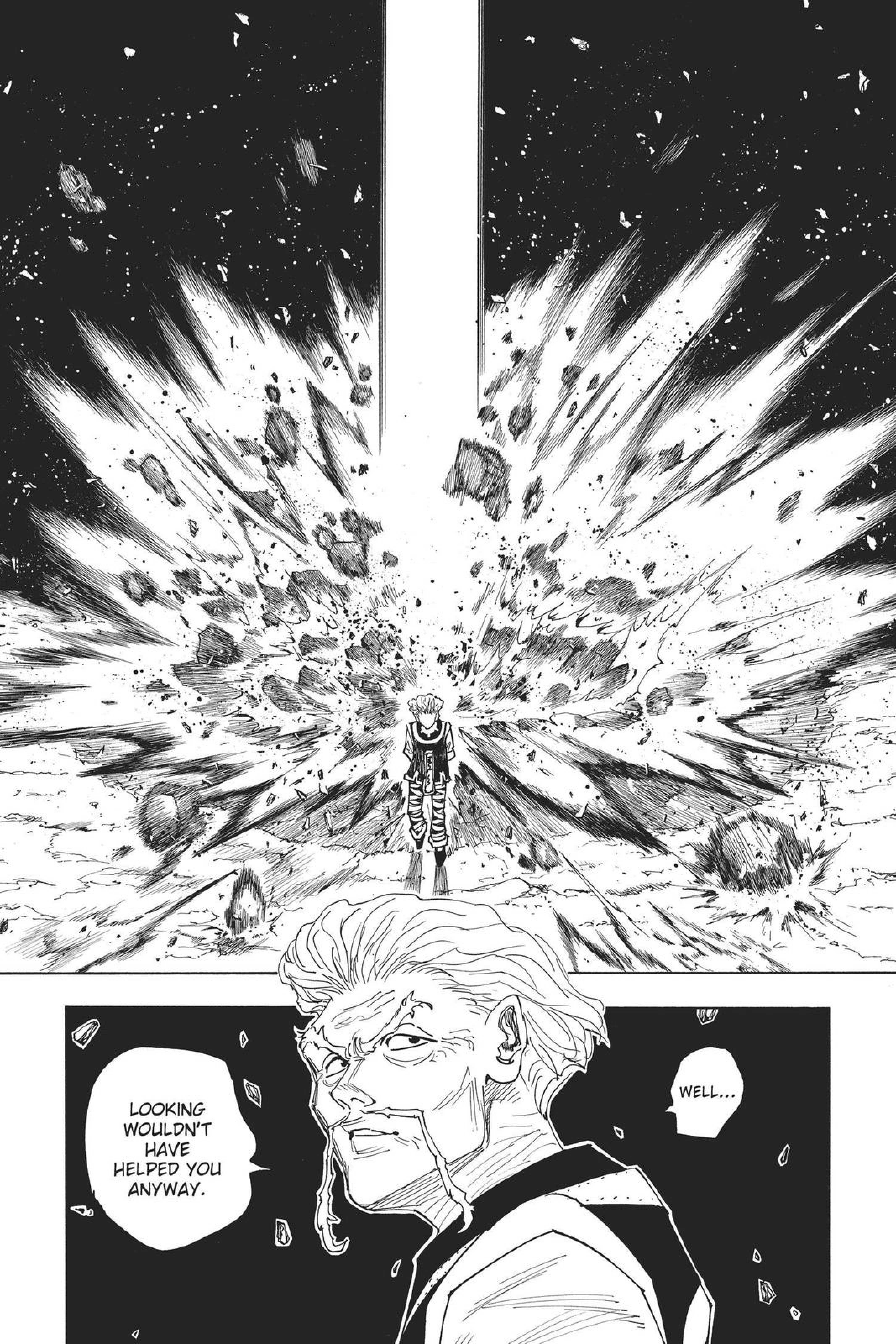

YOUPI PROVED HIS WORTH IN THE MOMENT AFTER THE BLAST.
BUT…
BETWEEN THE LINGERING PLEASURE AND THE NUMBING DESPAIR…
…YOUPI WAS STRIVING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO UTILIZE…
…THIS SELF-INDULGENT ABILITY…
…TO BETTER BENEFIT THE KING.
HE MUST DETACH HIMSELF FROM HIS EGO…
…TO SERVE HIS MASTER.

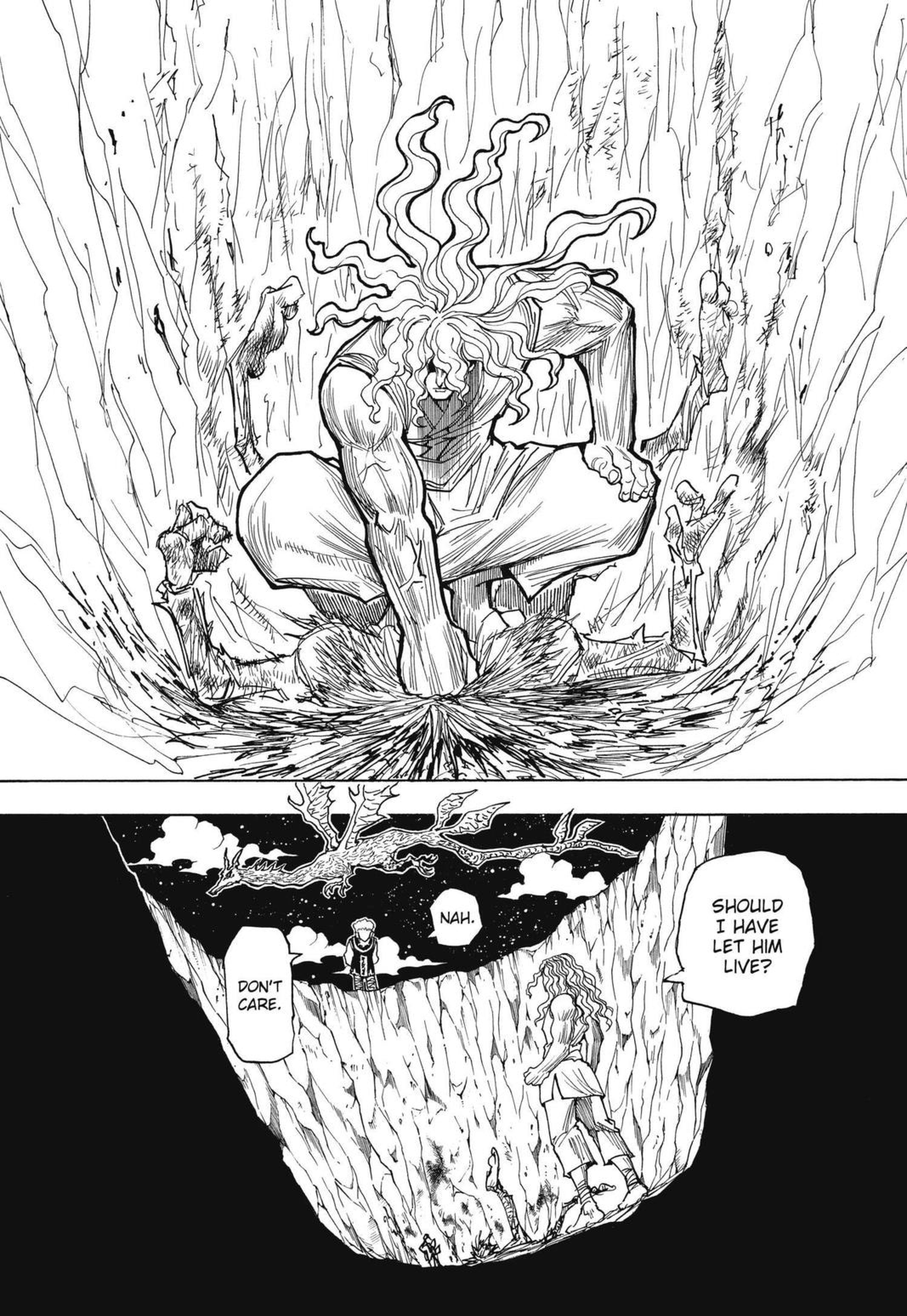

THE INSTINCTS OF AN ANT AND HIS NATURE AS A MAGICAL BEAST...
...FUNCTIONED CALMLY EVEN AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF HIS EXPLOSIVE EMOTIONS.
THE BEST WAY TO SERVE THE KING...
...IS TO CONTROL THIS FURY WITHOUT BEING CONSUMED...
...BY EMOTION.
THIS WILL LEAD DIRECTLY TO ELIMINATING THESE PESTS!!
YOUPI WAS NOW ARMED WITH BOTH PASSION AND PRESENCE OF MIND.
THE RISKS FOR KNUCKLE...
...WERE HIGH.

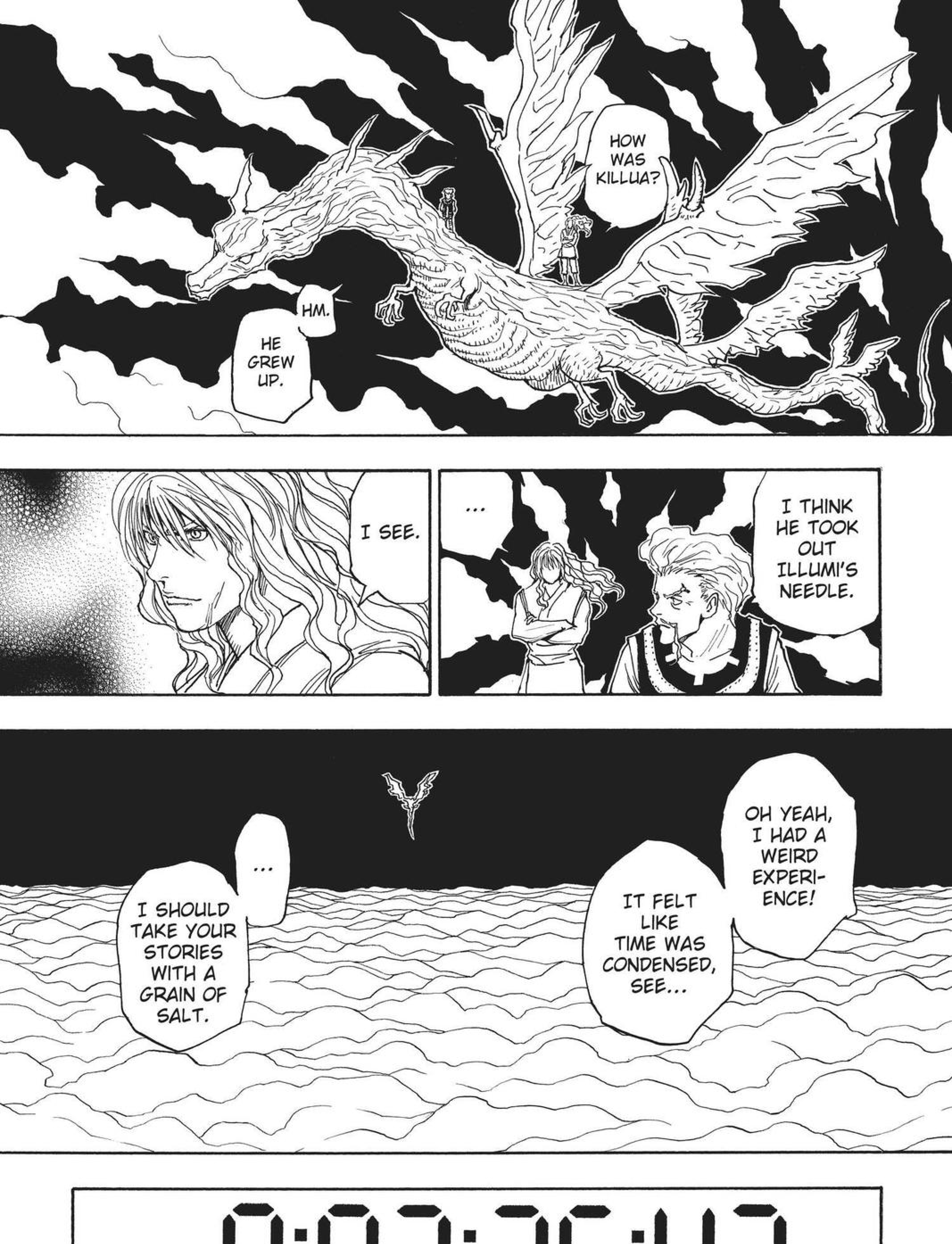

I REALLY WISH YOU WOULDN'T.
I'M NOT IN THE MOOD.
AW, COME ON! DON'T SAY THAT!
YOUR LUCK JUST HAPPENED TO RUN OUT TODAY!!
BE MY GUINEA PIG!
生涯現役
FOR MY...
...NEW ABILITY! ♡


SIGH
YOU DON'T HAFTA LOOK *THAT* UPSET.
I'D RATHER FIGHT SOMEONE ELSE TOO.
SUNGLASSES, HUGE PIPE. HE'S ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS, RIGHT?
...
THEN GO LOOK FOR *HIM*.
I FOUND HIM ALREADY, BUT IT'S NO USE!!
HE'S LOCKED UP INSIDE HIS SMOKE SCREEN.
I CAN'T GET THROUGH AT ALL.
I WANTED TO GET A BETTER VIEW...
SO I CLIMBED THE ROOF AND SPOTTED *YOU*.
THEN...
I'M JUST A WARM-UP BEFORE YOUR REAL TARGET?
DING DING DING!!
...
I'M TIRED...


HEAR ME OUT.
FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I TOOK OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS, I MAY HAVE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED AN INNOCENT BY...
MY ABILITY'S AMAZING!!
DON'T LET IT KNOCK YOUR SOCKS OFF!!
WELL, IT WILL ANYWAY.
SHEESH.
HOW SELF-CENTERED CAN YOU BE?
I SUPPOSE I CAN'T ASK YOU TO LET ME PASS.
DING DING DING!! ♡
?
BEHIND YOU...
YOU SHOULD BE CAREFUL.
JOLT
HA HA!! THAT'S SUCH AN OLD TRICK!!
I AIN'T FALLING FOR THAT!!
ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS TAUGHT ME...
NEVER TAKE YOUR EYES OFF THE ENEMY DURING--

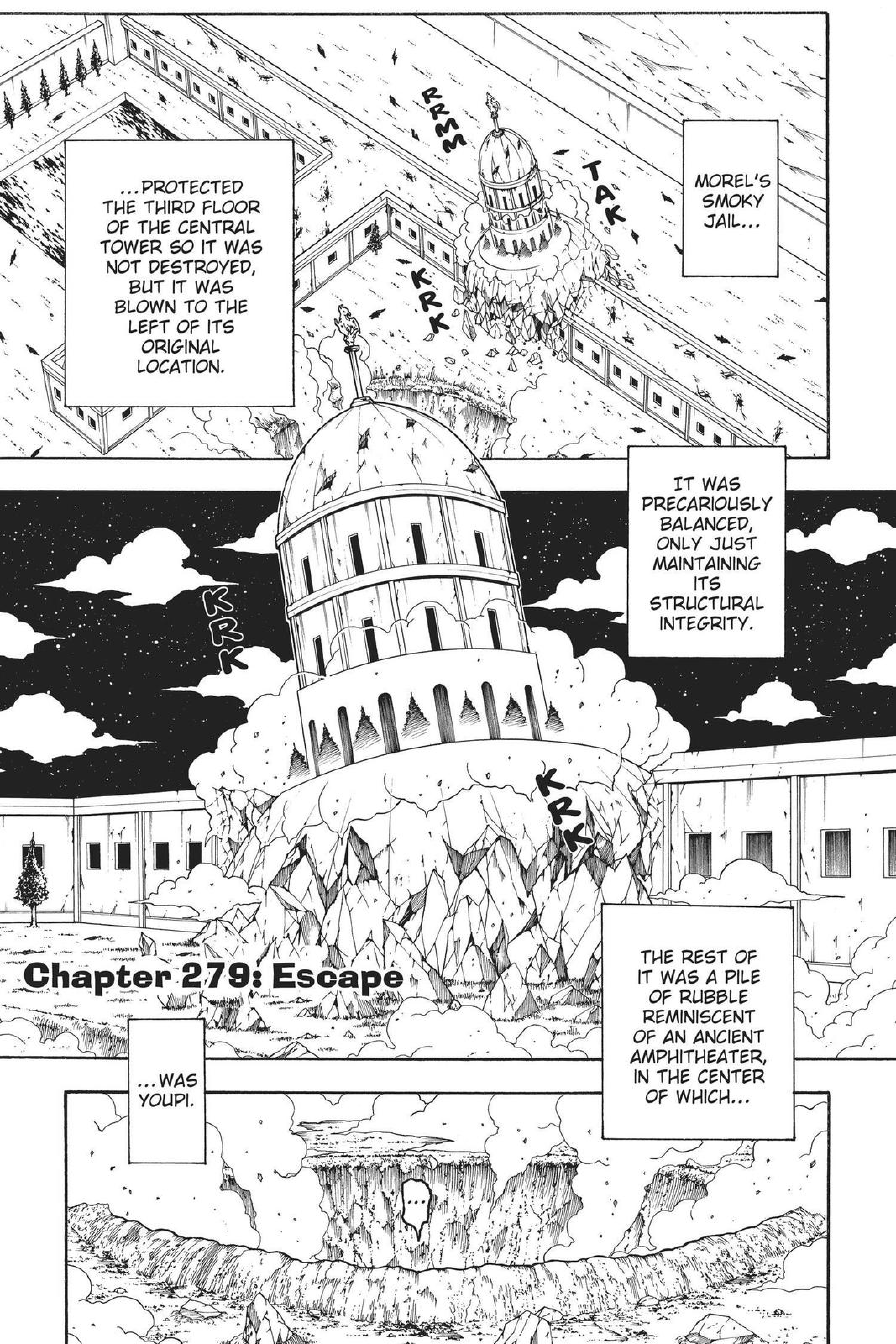

WELL...
LOOKING WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED YOU ANYWAY.

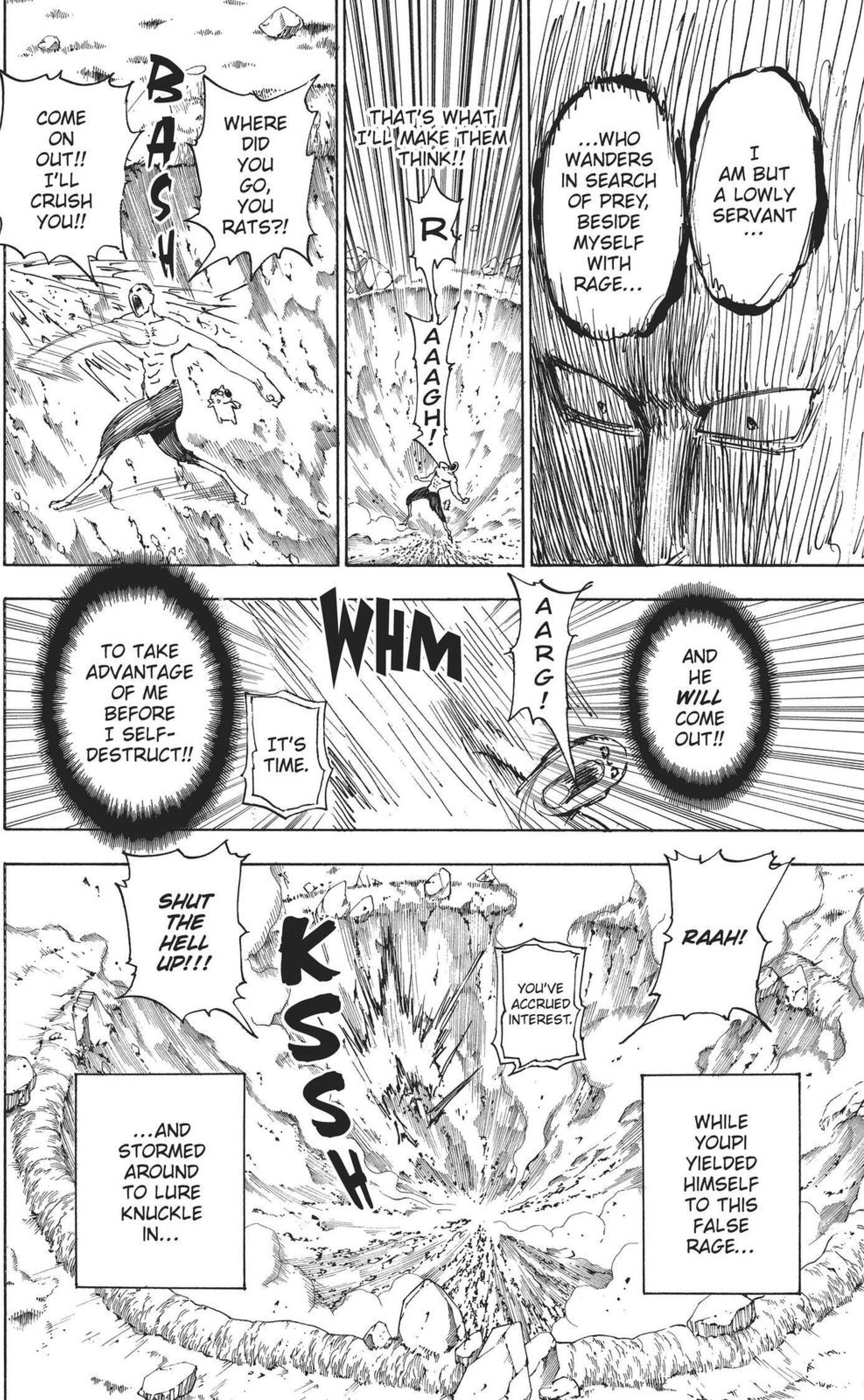

SHOULD I HAVE LET HIM LIVE?
NAH.
DON'T CARE.

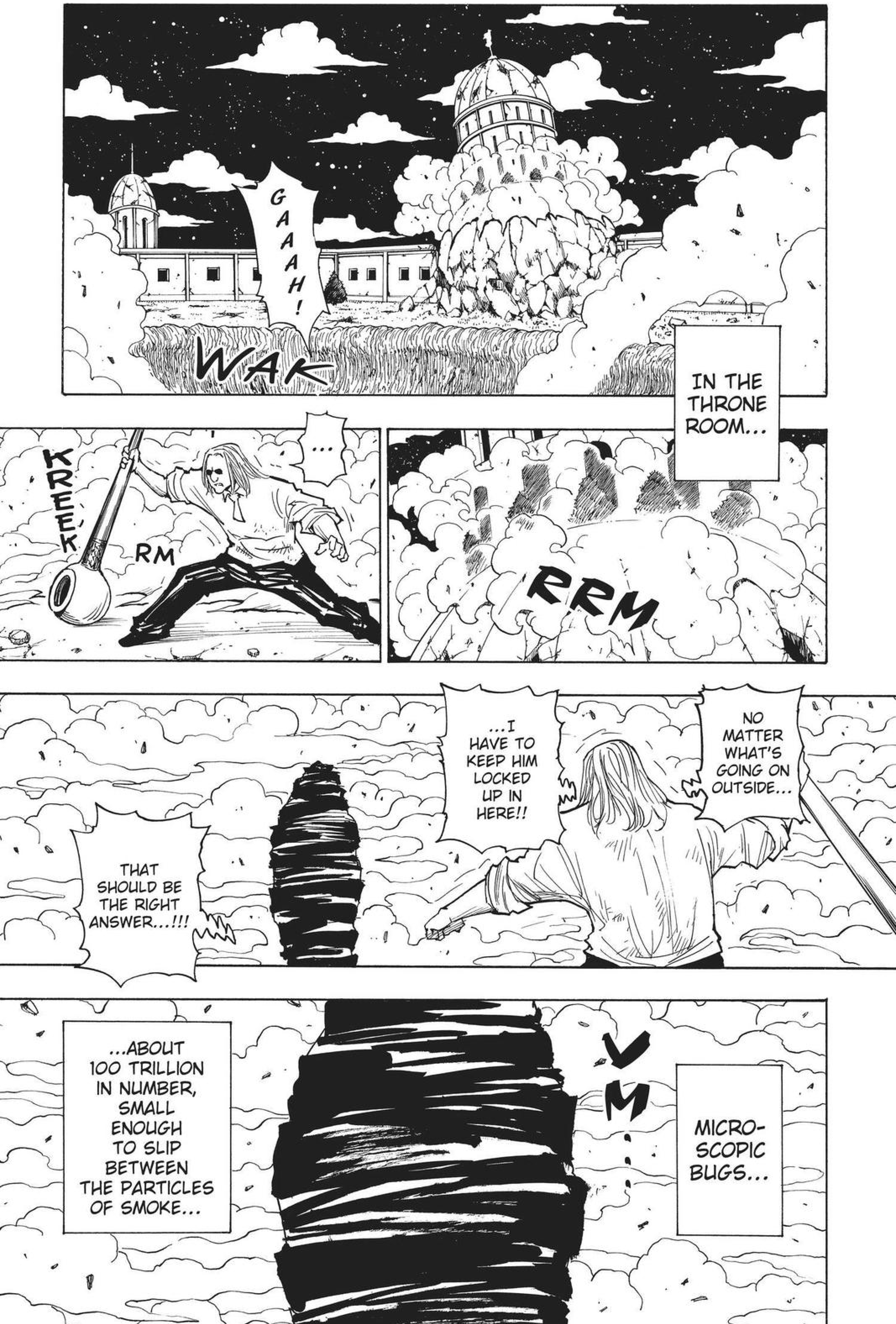

HOW WAS KILLUA?
HM.
HE GREW UP.
I THINK HE TOOK OUT ILLUMI'S NEEDLE.
...
I SEE.
OH YEAH, I HAD A WEIRD EXPERIENCE!
IT FELT LIKE TIME WAS CONDENSED, SEE...
...
I SHOULD TAKE YOUR STORIES WITH A GRAIN OF SALT.
0:03:35:47

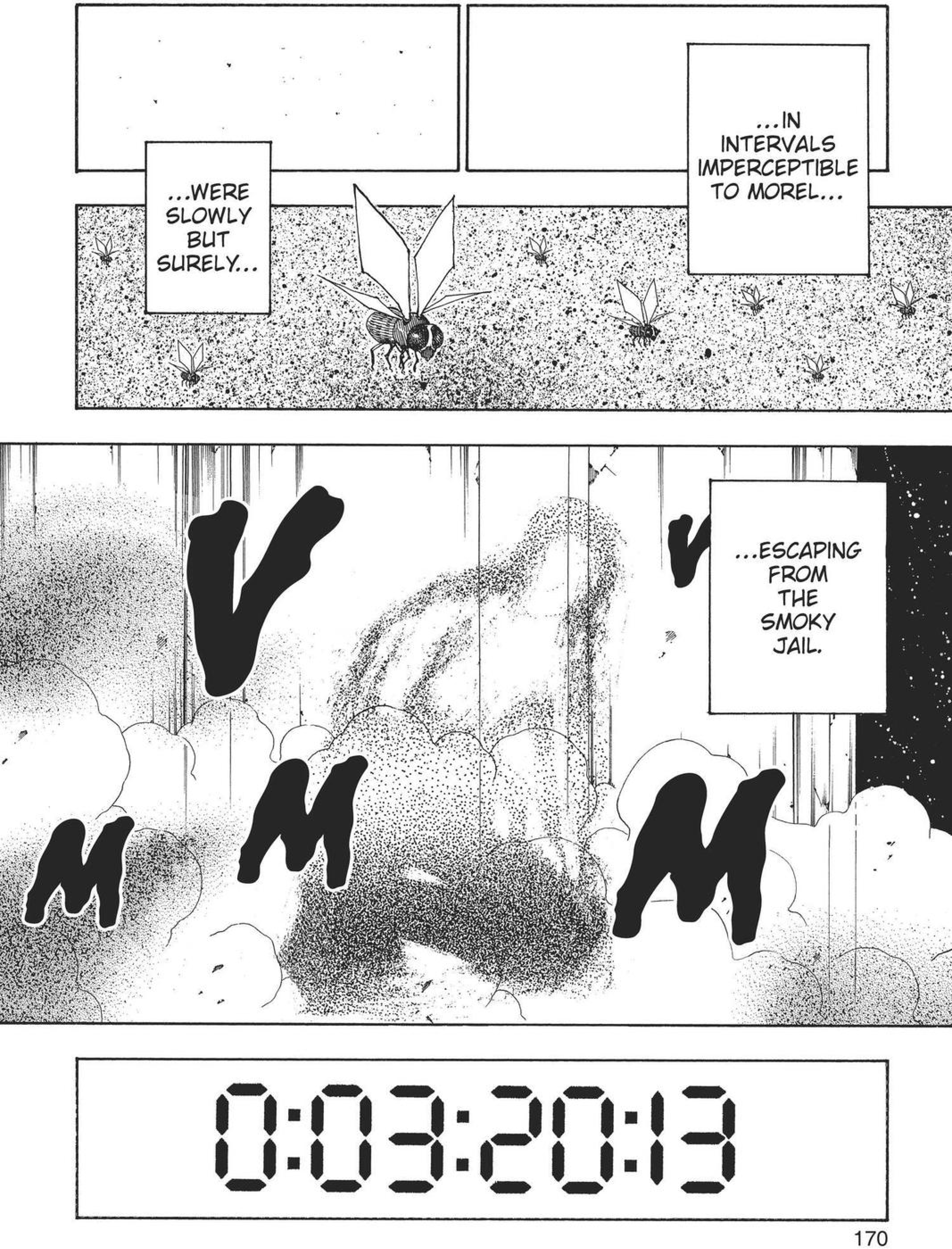
生涯現役

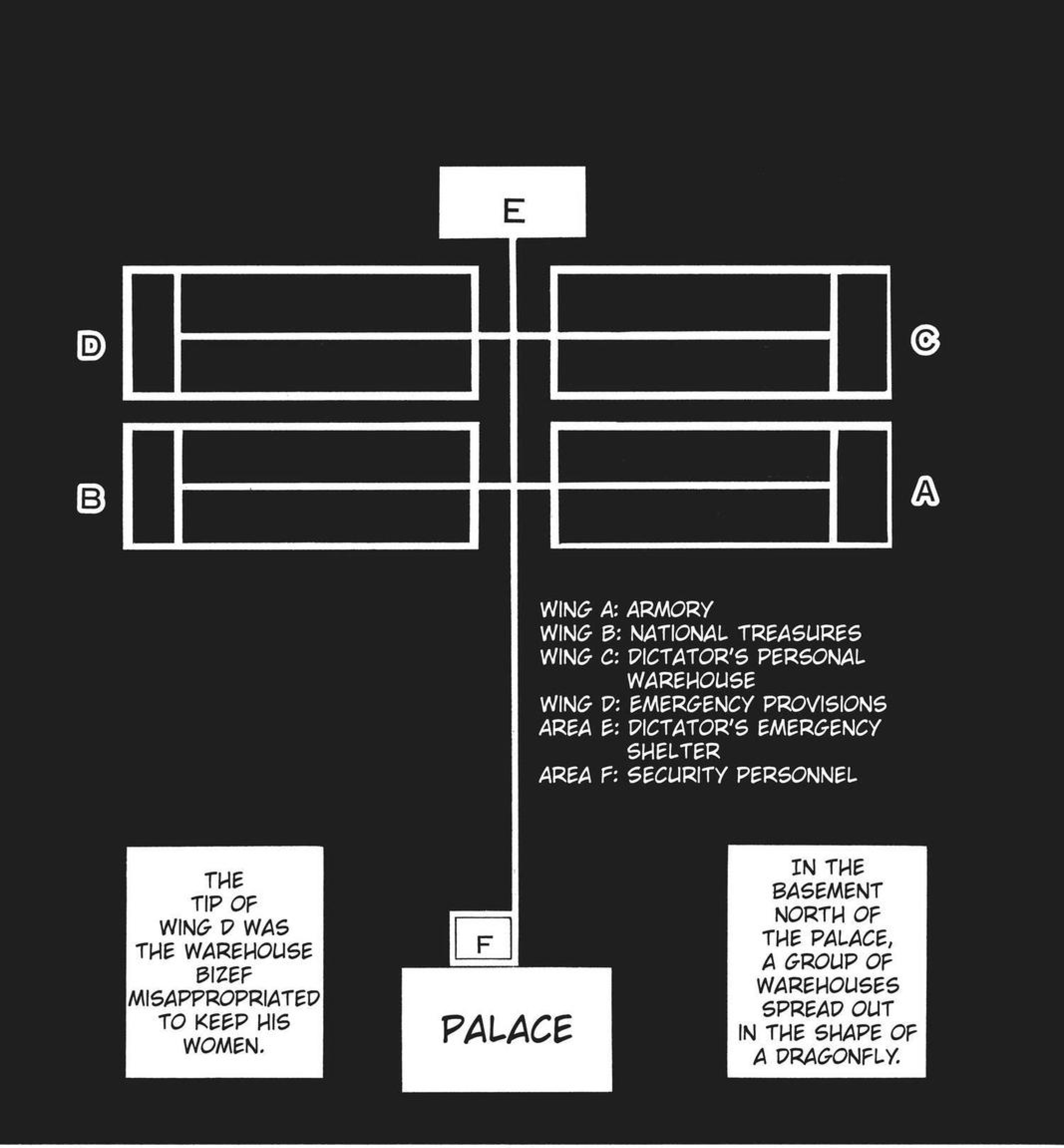
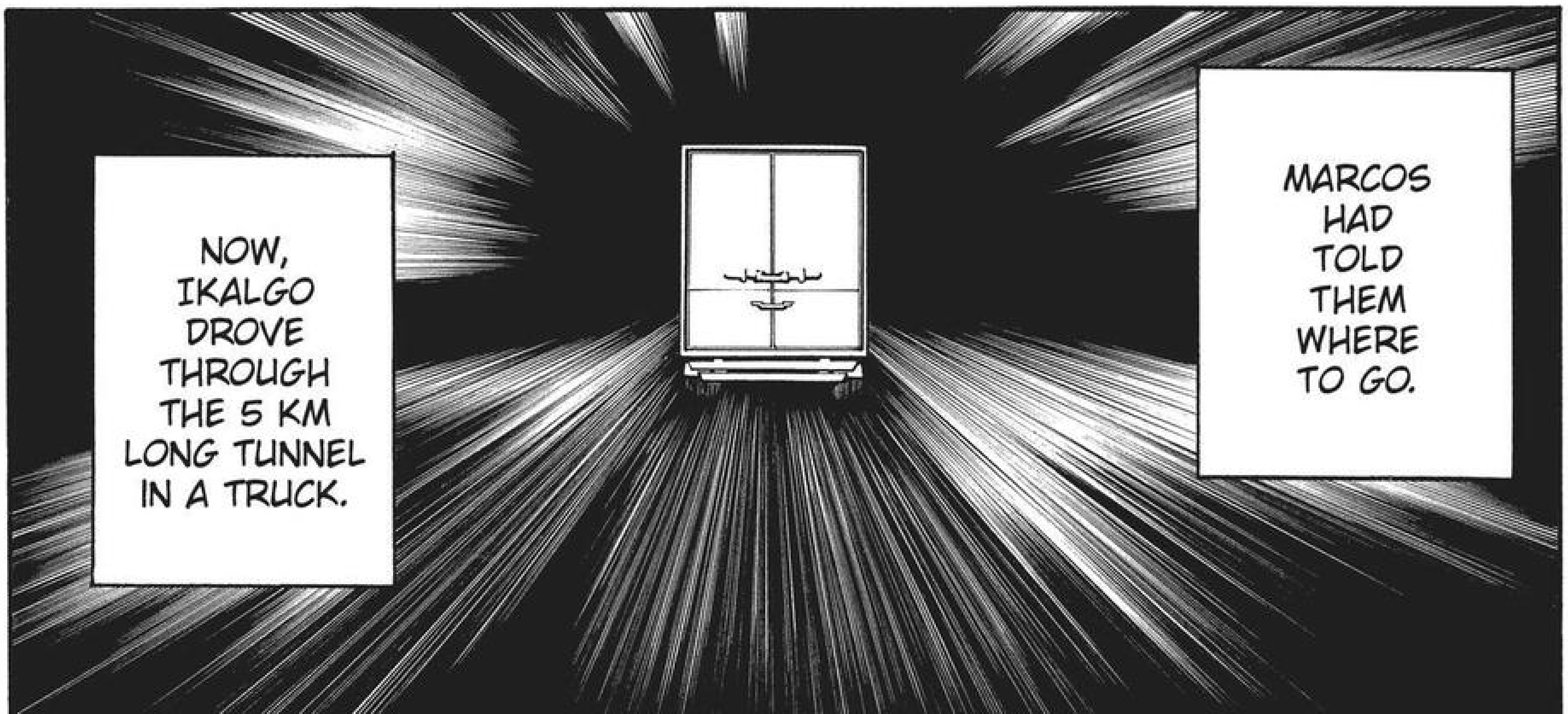
Chapter 279: Escape

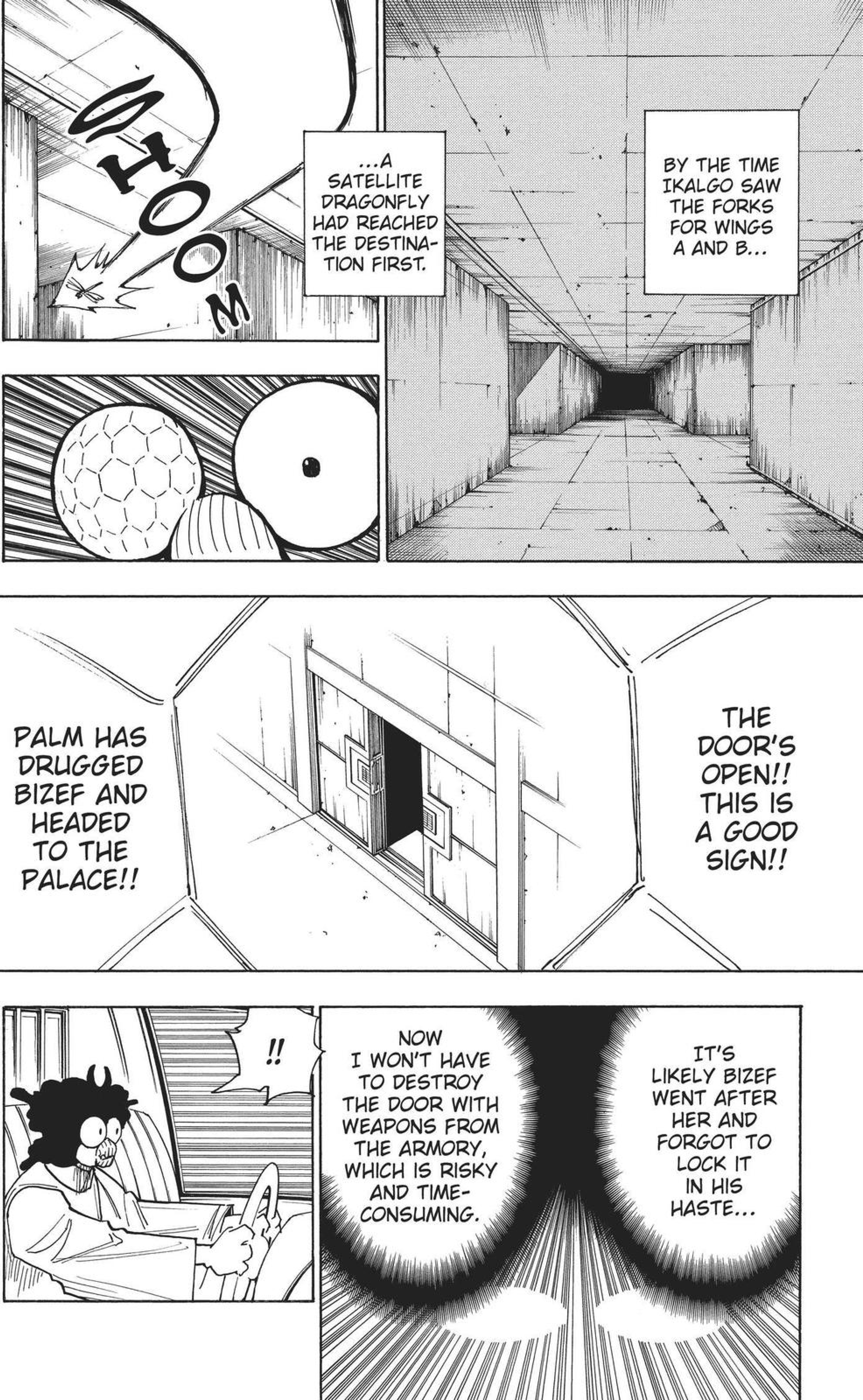

MOREL'S SMOKY JAIL...
...PROTECTED THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE CENTRAL TOWER SO IT WAS NOT DESTROYED, BUT IT WAS BLOWN TO THE LEFT OF ITS ORIGINAL LOCATION.
TAK
RRMM
KRK
IT WAS PRECARIOUSLY BALANCED, ONLY JUST MAINTAINING ITS STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY.
KRK
KRK
THE REST OF IT WAS A PILE OF RUBBLE REMINISCENT OF AN ANCIENT AMPHITHEATER, IN THE CENTER OF WHICH...
...WAS YOUPI.
...

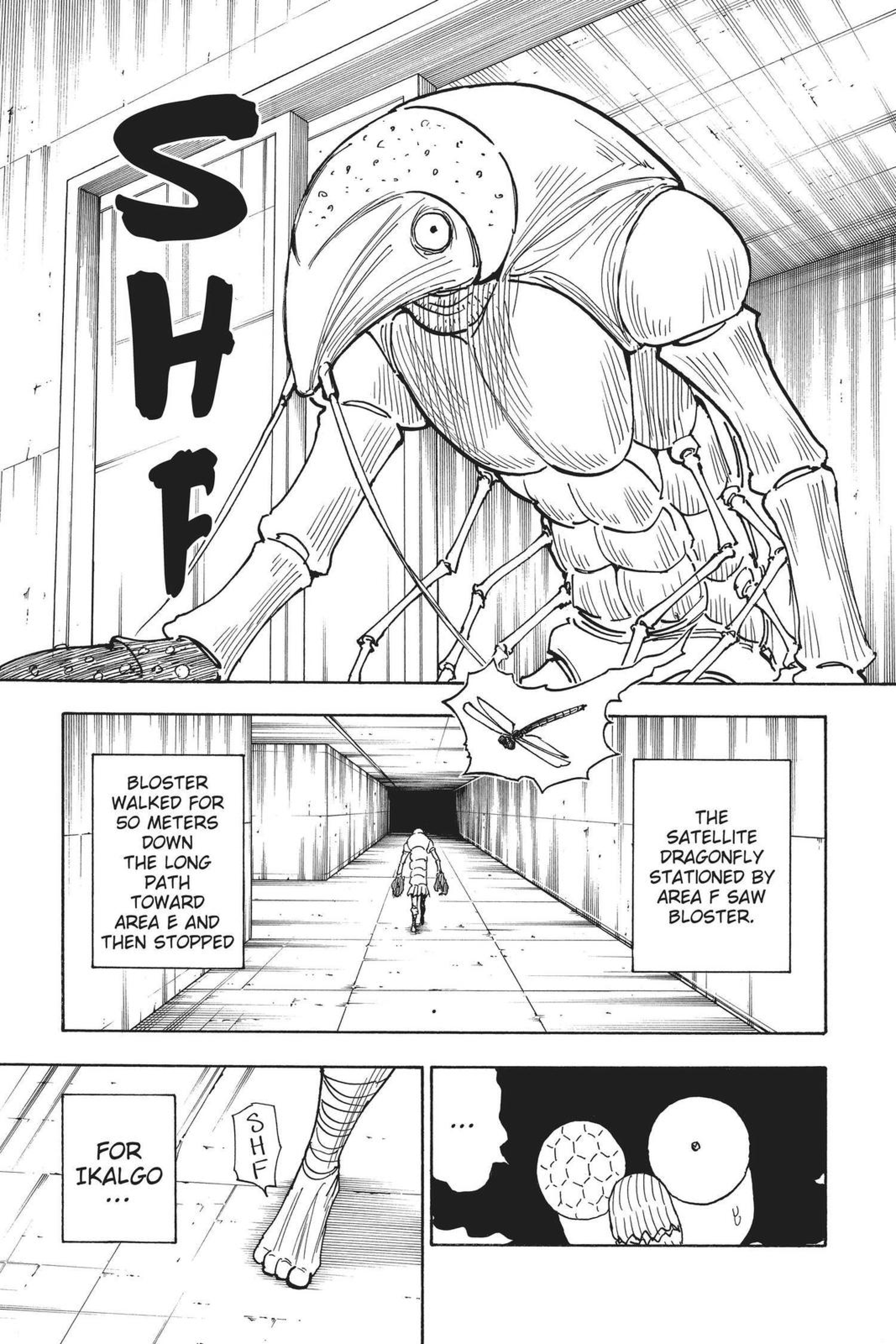

I AM BUT A LOWLY SERVANT…
…WHO WANDERS IN SEARCH OF PREY, BESIDE MYSELF WITH RAGE…
THAT'S WHAT I'LL MAKE THEM THINK!!
RAAAAGH!
WHERE DID YOU GO, YOU RATS?!
COME ON OUT!! I'LL CRUSH YOU!!
BASH
AND HE *WILL* COME OUT!!
AARG!
WHM
IT'S TIME.
TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME BEFORE I SELF-DESTRUCT!!
RAAH!
WHILE YOUPI YIELDED HIMSELF TO THIS FALSE RAGE…
YOU'VE ACCRUED INTEREST.
SHUT THE HELL UP!!!
KSSSH
…AND STORMED AROUND TO LURE KNUCKLE IN…

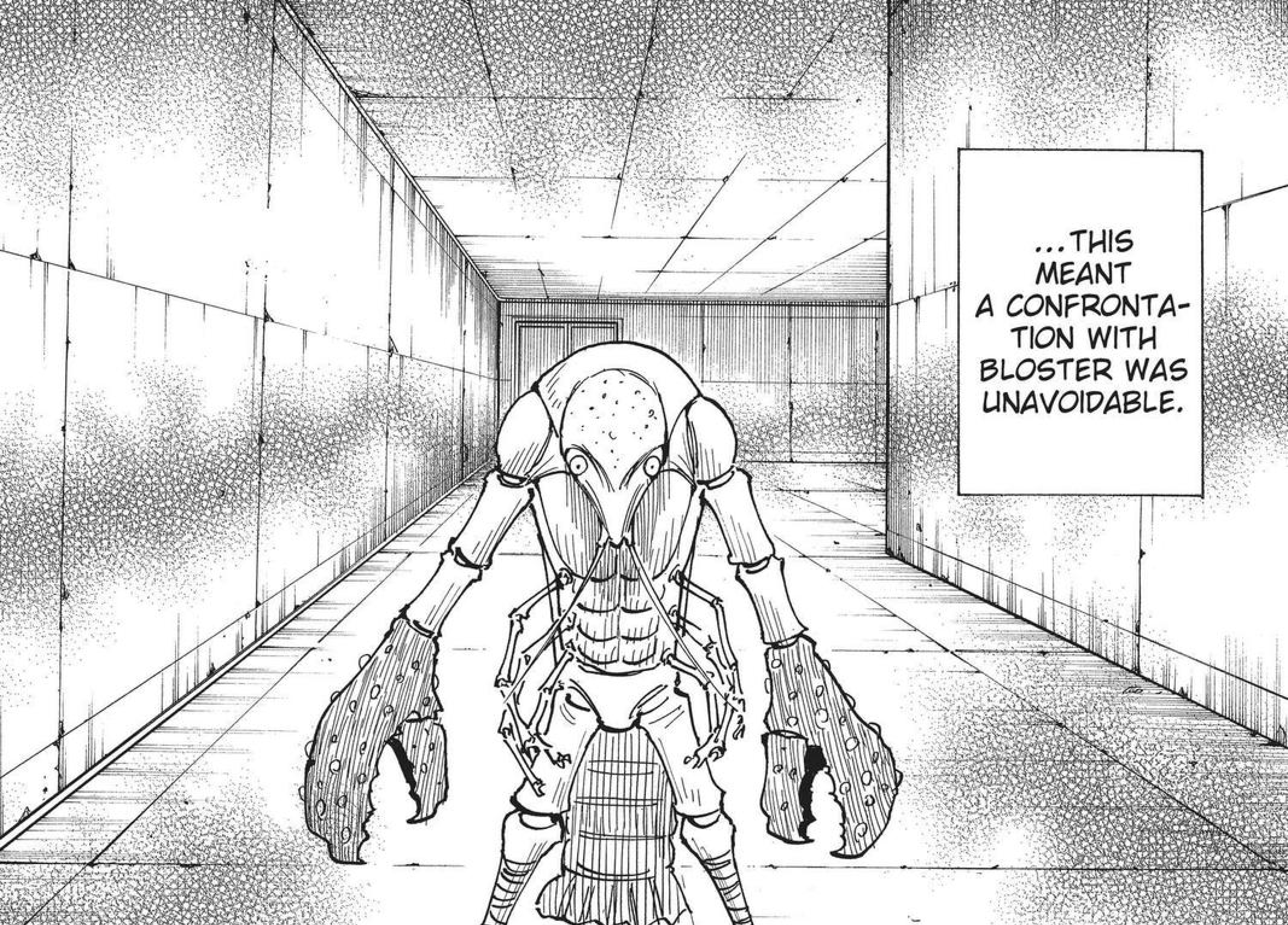

GAAAH!
WAK
IN THE THRONE ROOM...
RRM
...
KREEK
RM
NO MATTER WHAT'S GOING ON OUTSIDE...
...I HAVE TO KEEP HIM LOCKED UP IN HERE!!
THAT SHOULD BE THE RIGHT ANSWER...!!!
MICROSCOPIC BUGS...
VM...
...ABOUT 100 TRILLION IN NUMBER, SMALL ENOUGH TO SLIP BETWEEN THE PARTICLES OF SMOKE...

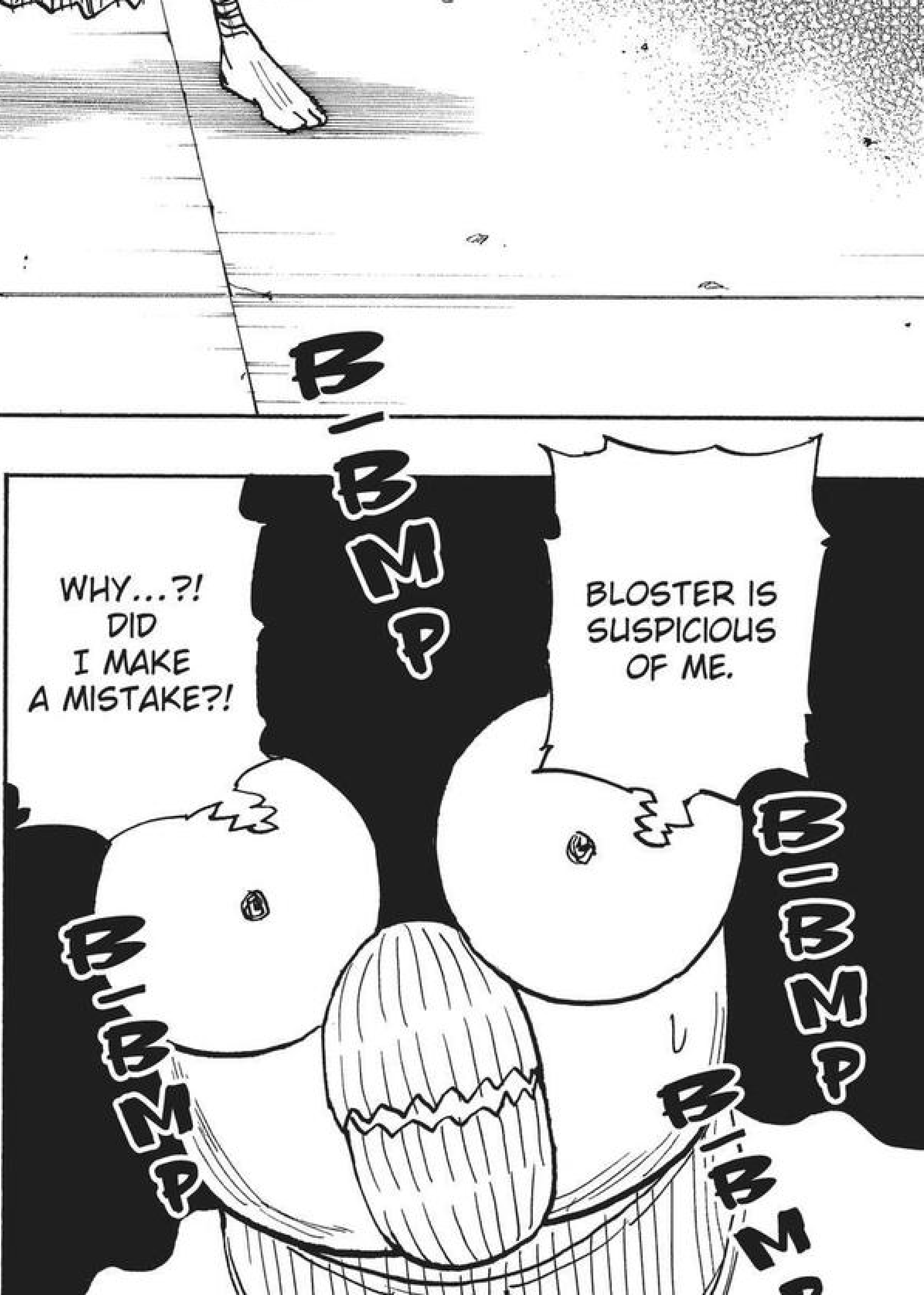

...IN INTERVALS IMPERCEPTIBLE TO MOREL...
...WERE SLOWLY BUT SURELY...
...ESCAPING FROM THE SMOKY JAIL.
VMMM
VMMM
0:03:20:13

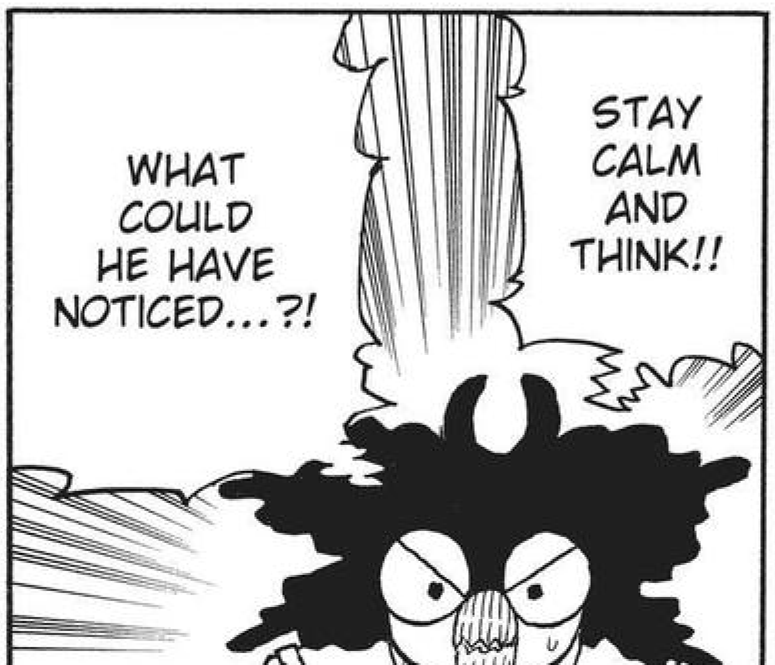

E
D
C
B
A
WING A: ARMORY
WING B: NATIONAL TREASURES
WING C: DICTATOR'S PERSONAL WAREHOUSE
WING D: EMERGENCY PROVISIONS
AREA E: DICTATOR'S EMERGENCY SHELTER
AREA F: SECURITY PERSONNEL
IN THE BASEMENT NORTH OF THE PALACE, A GROUP OF WAREHOUSES SPREAD OUT IN THE SHAPE OF A DRAGONFLY.
F
PALACE
THE TIP OF WING D WAS THE WAREHOUSE BIZEF MISAPPROPRIATED TO KEEP HIS WOMEN.

MARCOS HAD TOLD THEM WHERE TO GO.
NOW, IKALGO DROVE THROUGH THE 5 KM LONG TUNNEL IN A TRUCK.

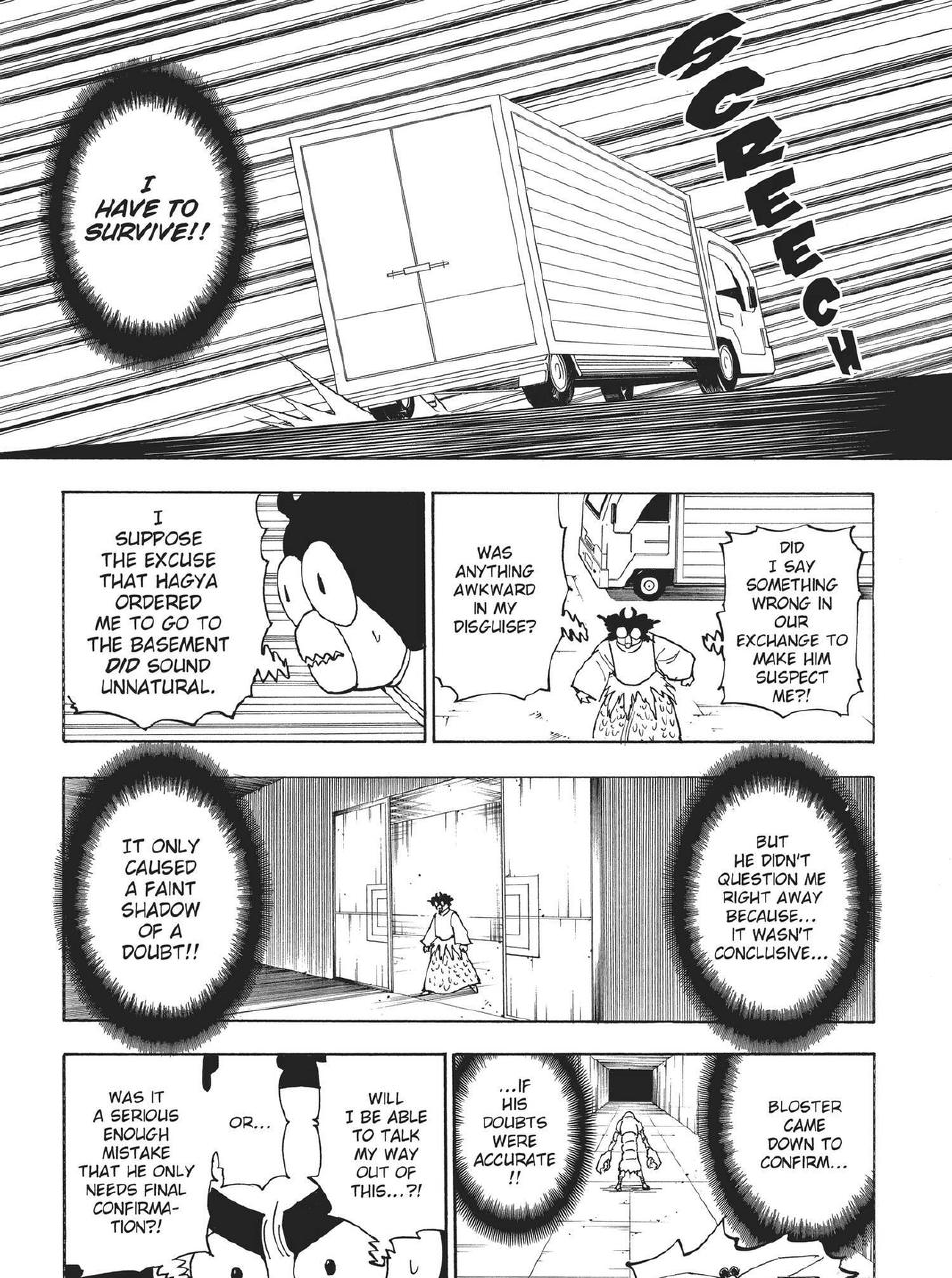

BY THE TIME IKALGO SAW THE FORKS FOR WINGS A AND B…
…A SATELLITE DRAGONFLY HAD REACHED THE DESTINATION FIRST.
WHOOM
THE DOOR'S OPEN!! THIS IS A GOOD SIGN!!
PALM HAS DRUGGED BIZEF AND HEADED TO THE PALACE!!
IT'S LIKELY BIZEF WENT AFTER HER AND FORGOT TO LOCK IT IN HIS HASTE…
NOW I WON'T HAVE TO DESTROY THE DOOR WITH WEAPONS FROM THE ARMORY, WHICH IS RISKY AND TIME-CONSUMING.
!!

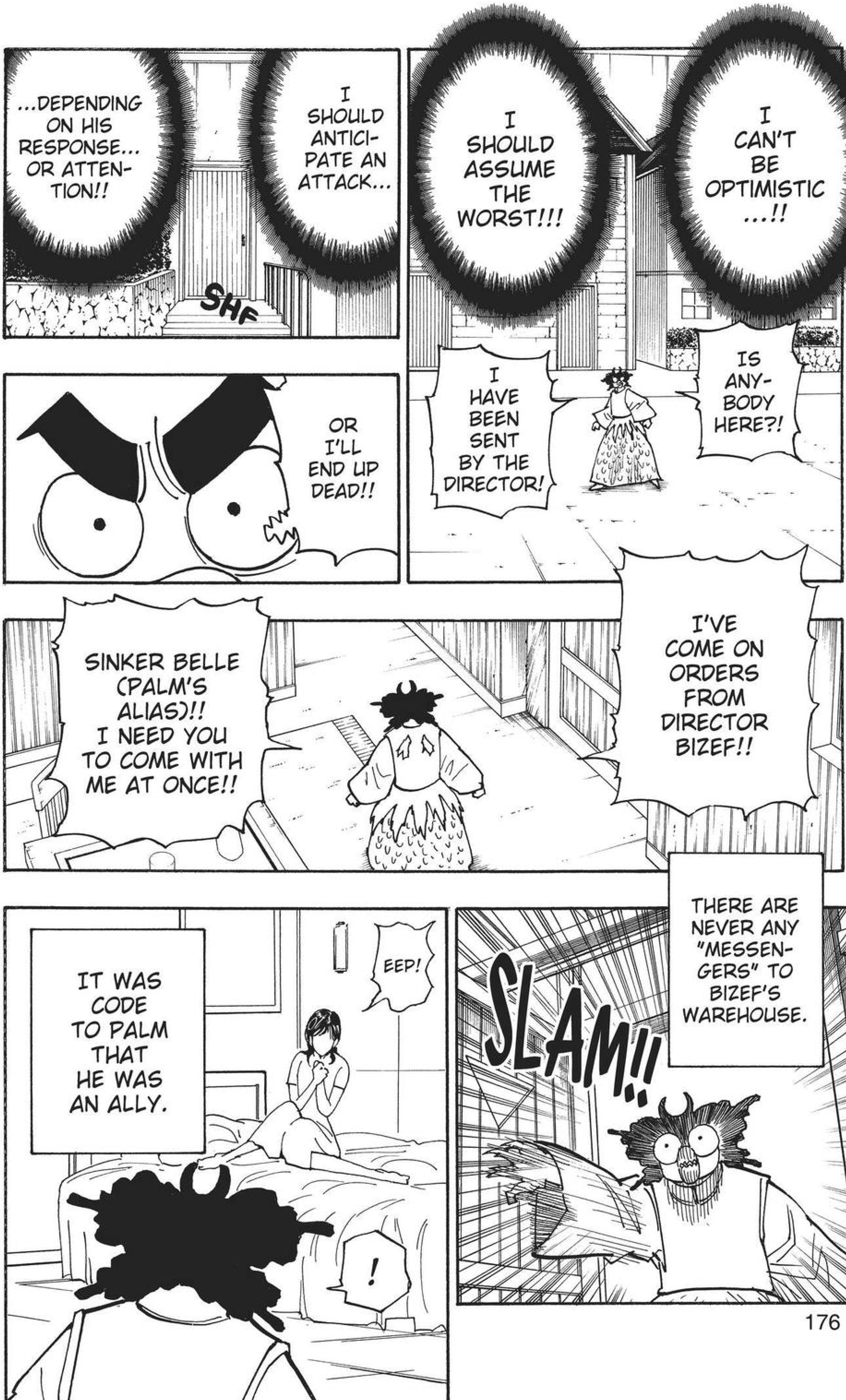

SHF
THE SATELLITE DRAGONFLY STATIONED BY AREA F SAW BLOSTER.
BLOSTER WALKED FOR 50 METERS DOWN THE LONG PATH TOWARD AREA E AND THEN STOPPED
...
FOR IKALGO ...
SHF

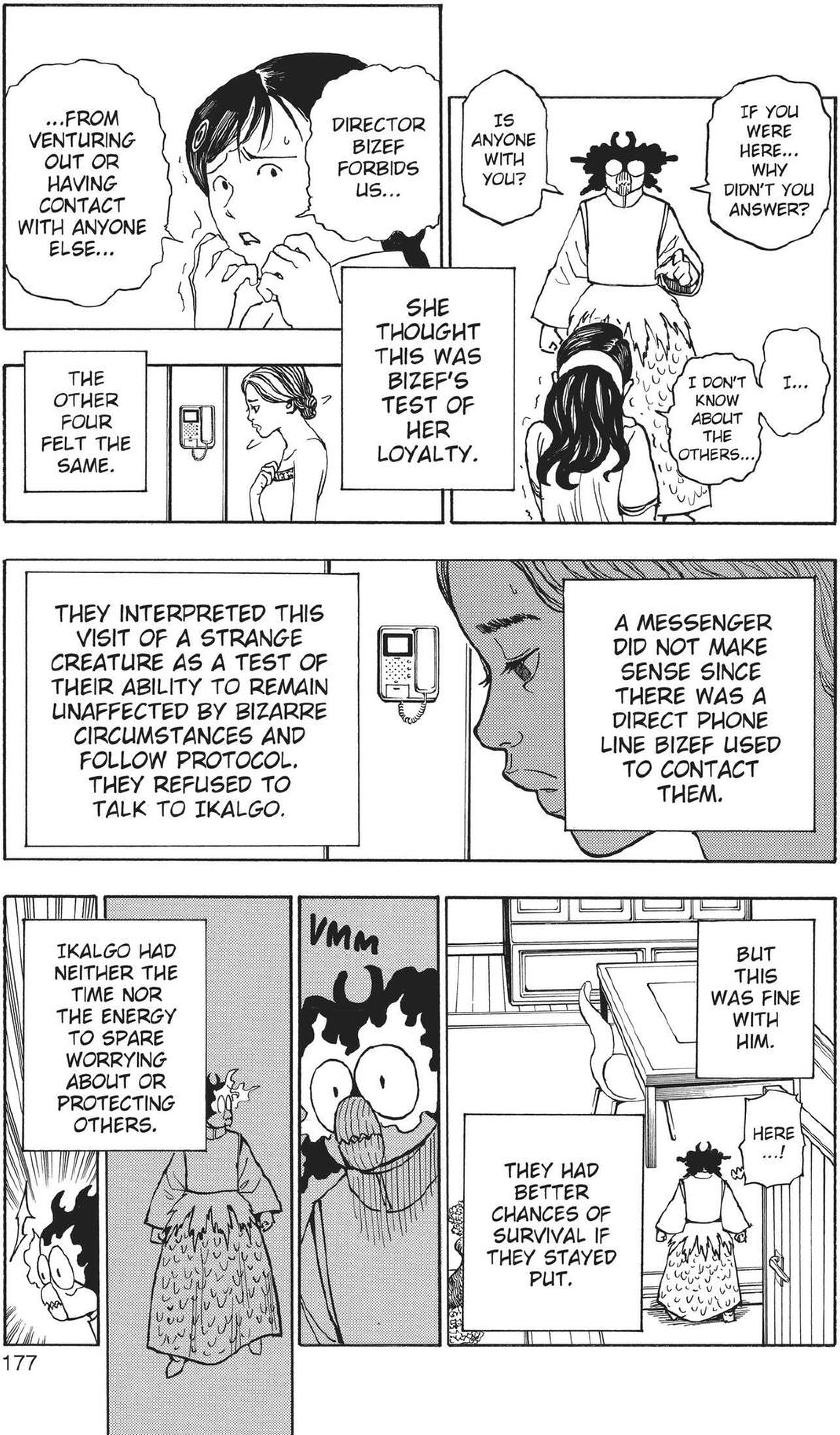

...THIS MEANT A CONFRONTATION WITH BLOSTER WAS UNAVOIDABLE.

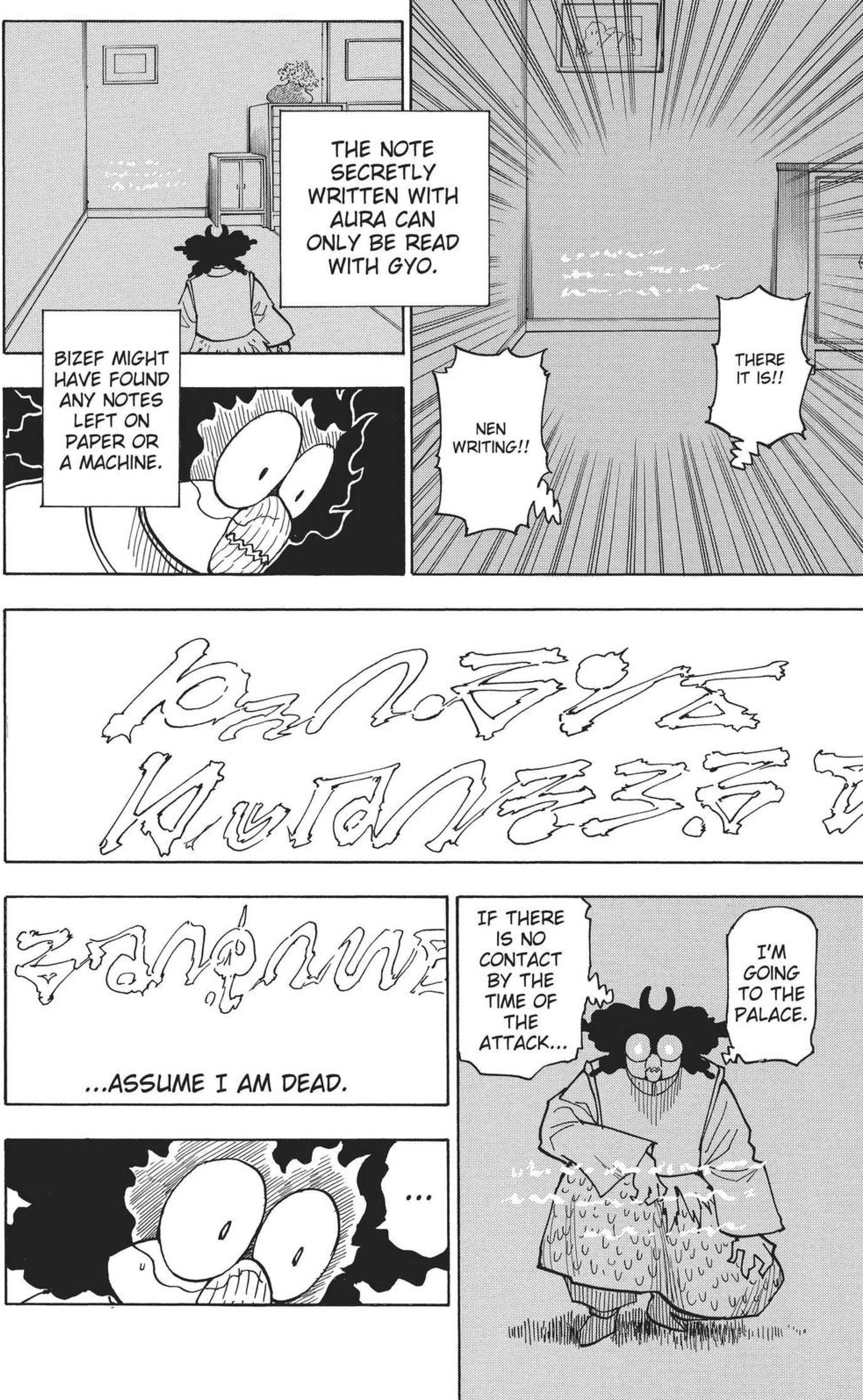

BLOSTER IS SUSPICIOUS OF ME.
B-BMP
B-BMP
B-BMP
B-BMP
B-BMP
WHY...?! DID I MAKE A MISTAKE?!

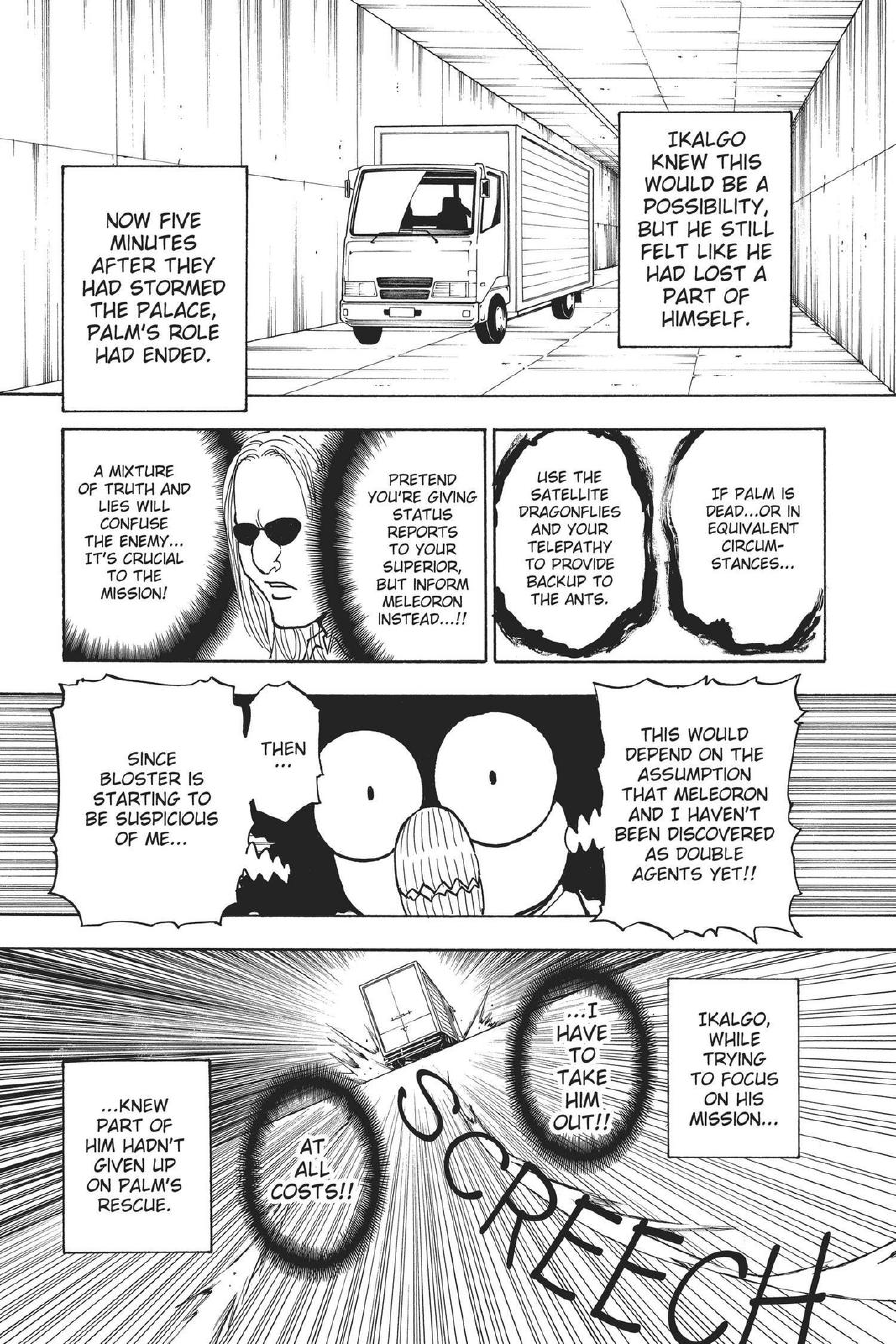

STAY CALM AND THINK!!
WHAT COULD HE HAVE NOTICED...?!

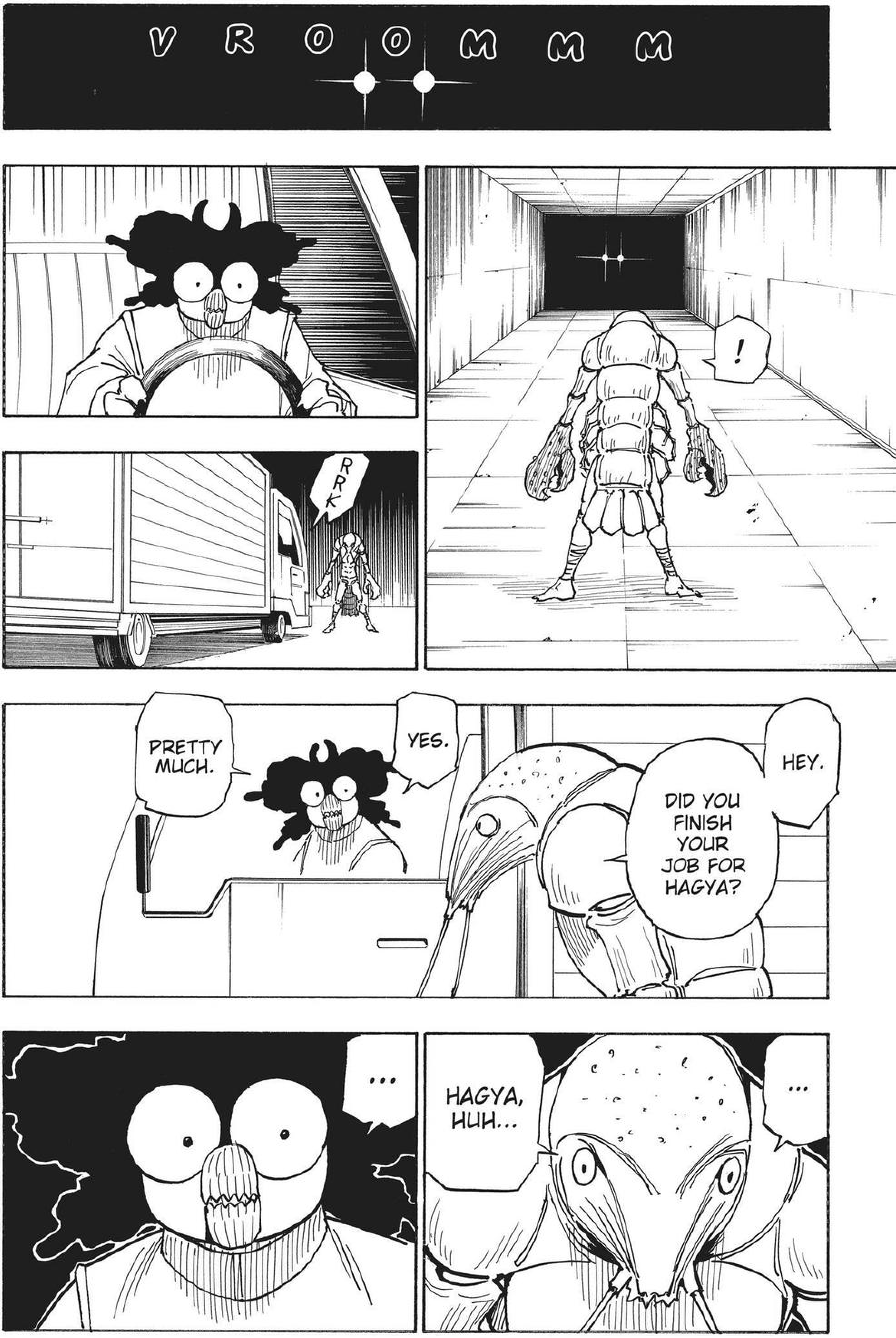

SCREECH
I HAVE TO SURVIVE!!
DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG IN OUR EXCHANGE TO MAKE HIM SUSPECT ME?!
WAS ANYTHING AWKWARD IN MY DISGUISE?
I SUPPOSE THE EXCUSE THAT HAGYA ORDERED ME TO GO TO THE BASEMENT *DID* SOUND UNNATURAL.
BUT HE DIDN'T QUESTION ME RIGHT AWAY BECAUSE... IT WASN'T CONCLUSIVE...
IT ONLY CAUSED A FAINT SHADOW OF A DOUBT!!
BLOSTER CAME DOWN TO CONFIRM...
...IF HIS DOUBTS WERE ACCURATE!!
WILL I BE ABLE TO TALK MY WAY OUT OF THIS...?!
OR...
WAS IT A SERIOUS ENOUGH MISTAKE THAT HE ONLY NEEDS FINAL CONFIRMATION?!

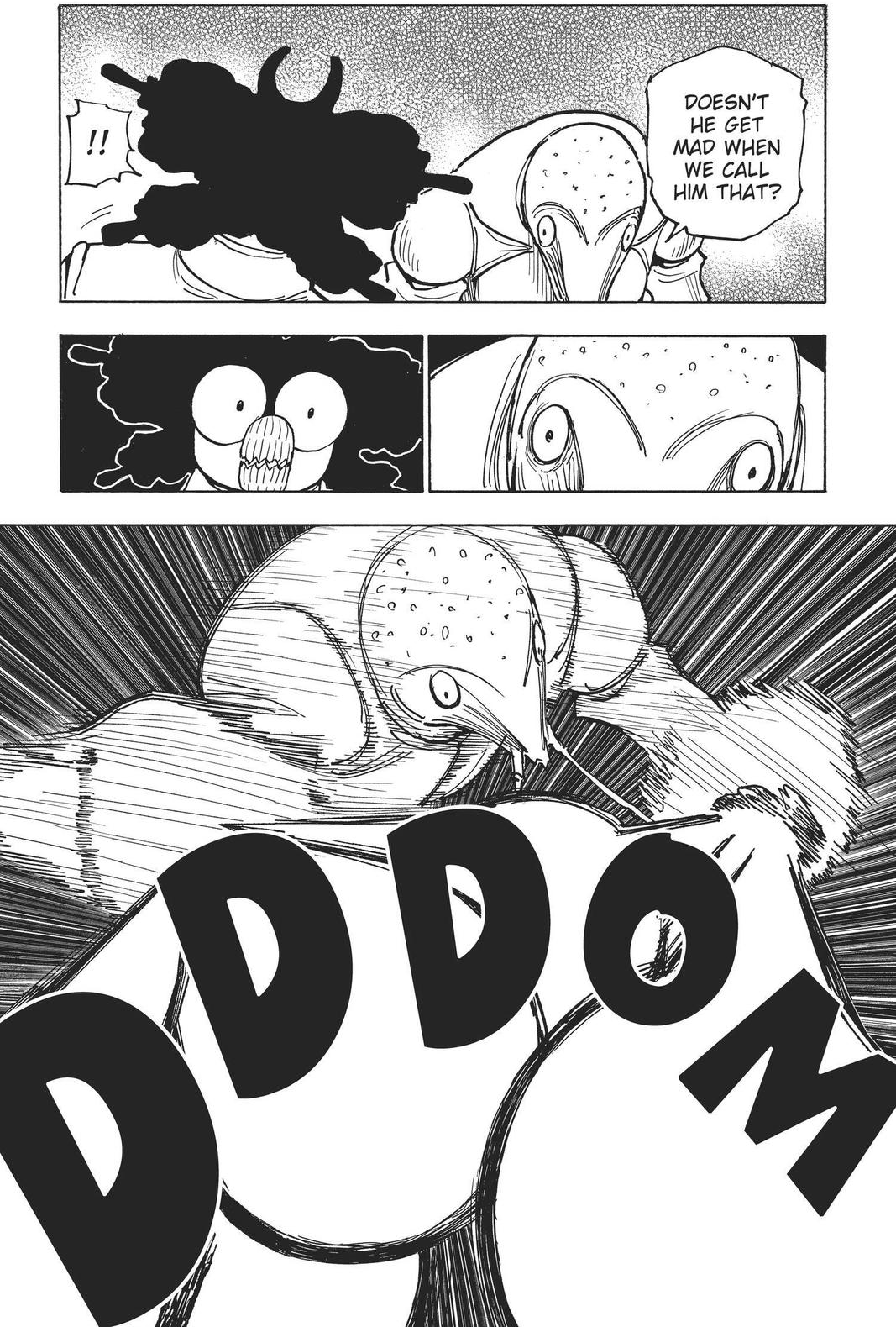

I CAN'T BE OPTIMISTIC ...!!
I SHOULD ASSUME THE WORST!!!
I SHOULD ANTICIPATE AN ATTACK...
...DEPENDING ON HIS RESPONSE... OR ATTENTION!!
SHF
OR I'LL END UP DEAD!!
IS ANYBODY HERE?!
I HAVE BEEN SENT BY THE DIRECTOR!
I'VE COME ON ORDERS FROM DIRECTOR BIZEF!!
SINKER BELLE (PALM'S ALIAS)!! I NEED YOU TO COME WITH ME AT ONCE!!
THERE ARE NEVER ANY "MESSENGERS" TO BIZEF'S WAREHOUSE.
SLAM!!
EEP!
!
IT WAS CODE TO PALM THAT HE WAS AN ALLY.

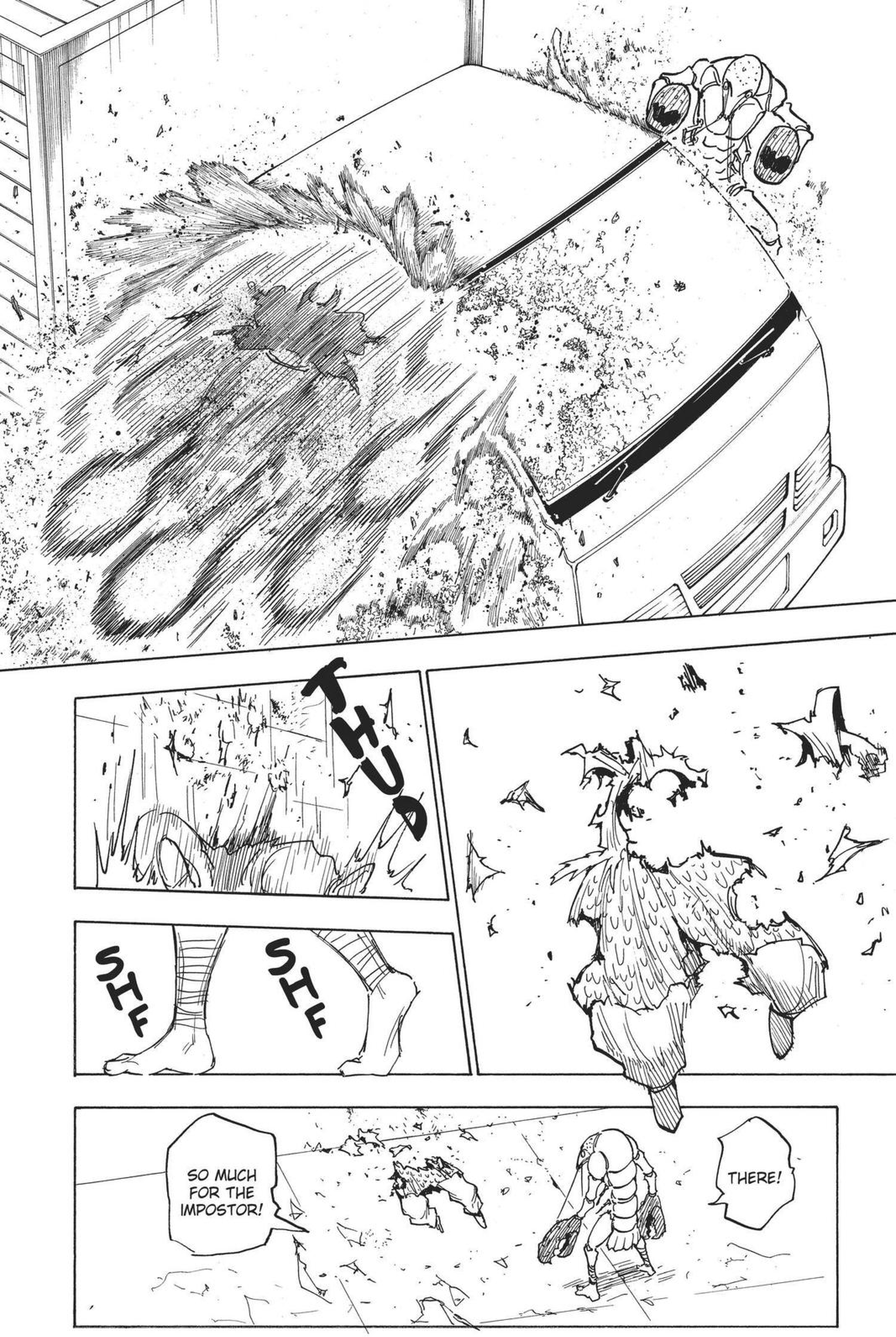

IF YOU WERE HERE... WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER?
IS ANYONE WITH YOU?
I...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE OTHERS...
DIRECTOR BIZEF FORBIDS US...
...FROM VENTURING OUT OR HAVING CONTACT WITH ANYONE ELSE...
SHE THOUGHT THIS WAS BIZEF'S TEST OF HER LOYALTY.
THE OTHER FOUR FELT THE SAME.
A MESSENGER DID NOT MAKE SENSE SINCE THERE WAS A DIRECT PHONE LINE BIZEF USED TO CONTACT THEM.
THEY INTERPRETED THIS VISIT OF A STRANGE CREATURE AS A TEST OF THEIR ABILITY TO REMAIN UNAFFECTED BY BIZARRE CIRCUMSTANCES AND FOLLOW PROTOCOL. THEY REFUSED TO TALK TO IKALGO.
BUT THIS WAS FINE WITH HIM.
HERE ...!
THEY HAD BETTER CHANCES OF SURVIVAL IF THEY STAYED PUT.
VMM
IKALGO HAD NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE ENERGY TO SPARE WORRYING ABOUT OR PROTECTING OTHERS.

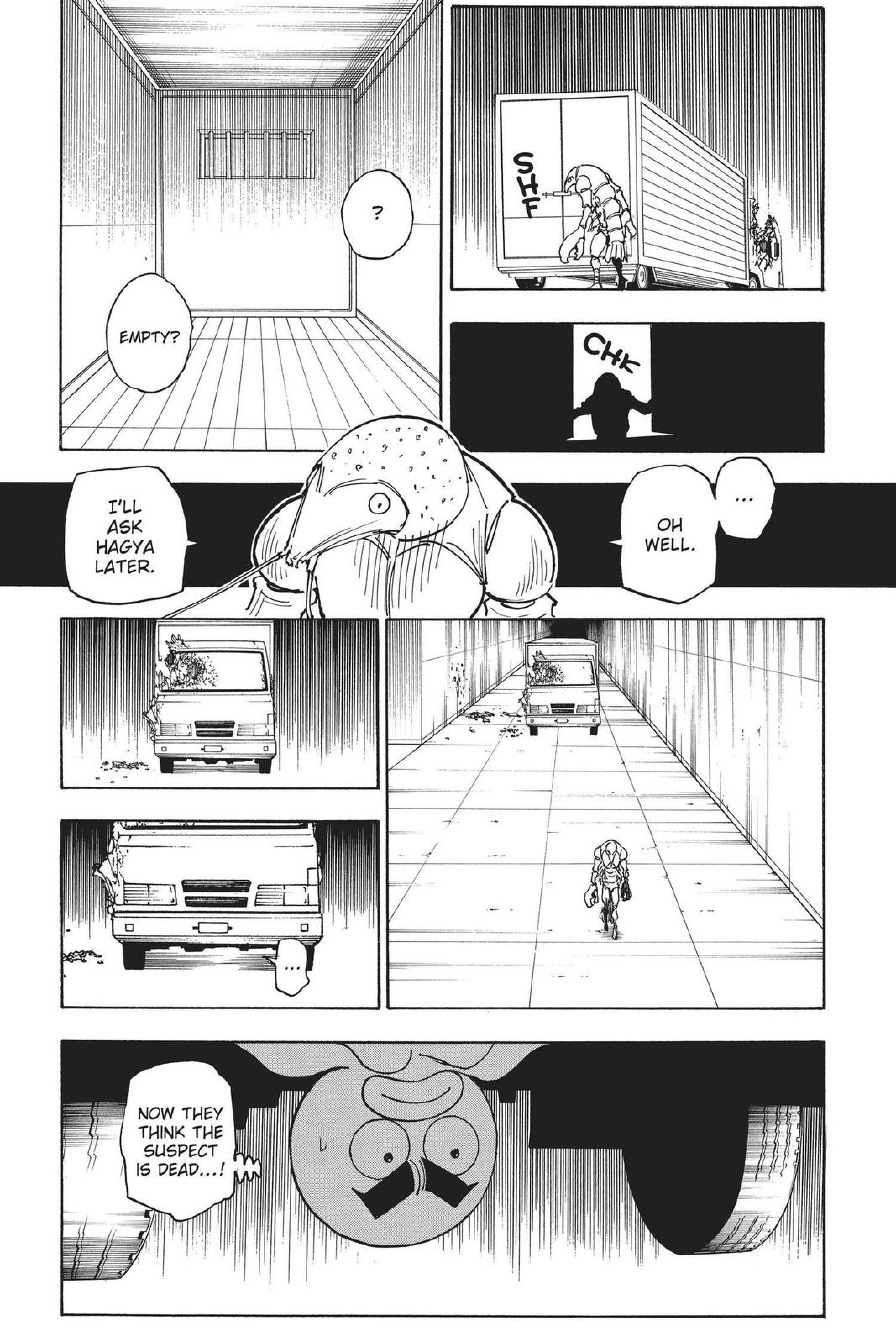

THERE IT IS!!
NEN WRITING!!
THE NOTE SECRETLY WRITTEN WITH AURA CAN ONLY BE READ WITH GYO.
BIZEF MIGHT HAVE FOUND ANY NOTES LEFT ON PAPER OR A MACHINE.
I'M GOING TO THE PALACE.
IF THERE IS NO CONTACT BY THE TIME OF THE ATTACK...
...ASSUME I AM DEAD.
...

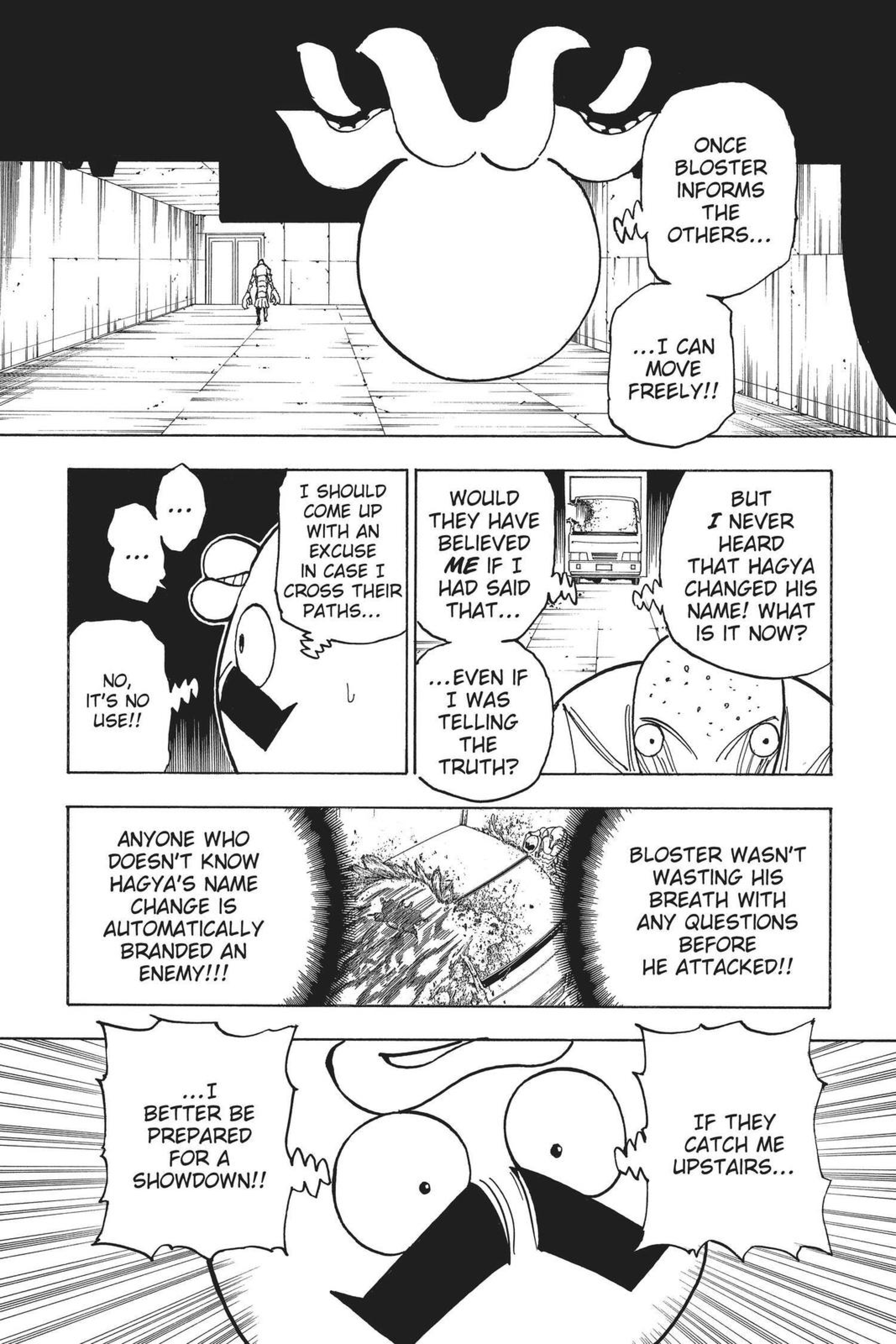

IKALGO KNEW THIS WOULD BE A POSSIBILITY, BUT HE STILL FELT LIKE HE HAD LOST A PART OF HIMSELF.
NOW FIVE MINUTES AFTER THEY HAD STORMED THE PALACE, PALM'S ROLE HAD ENDED.
IF PALM IS DEAD...OR IN EQUIVALENT CIRCUMSTANCES...
USE THE SATELLITE DRAGONFLIES AND YOUR TELEPATHY TO PROVIDE BACKUP TO THE ANTS.
PRETEND YOU'RE GIVING STATUS REPORTS TO YOUR SUPERIOR, BUT INFORM MELEORON INSTEAD...!!
A MIXTURE OF TRUTH AND LIES WILL CONFUSE THE ENEMY... IT'S CRUCIAL TO THE MISSION!
THIS WOULD DEPEND ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT MELEORON AND I HAVEN'T BEEN DISCOVERED AS DOUBLE AGENTS YET!!
THEN...
SINCE BLOSTER IS STARTING TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF ME...
IKALGO, WHILE TRYING TO FOCUS ON HIS MISSION...
...I HAVE TO TAKE HIM OUT!!
AT ALL COSTS!!
...KNEW PART OF HIM HADN'T GIVEN UP ON PALM'S RESCUE.
SCREECH

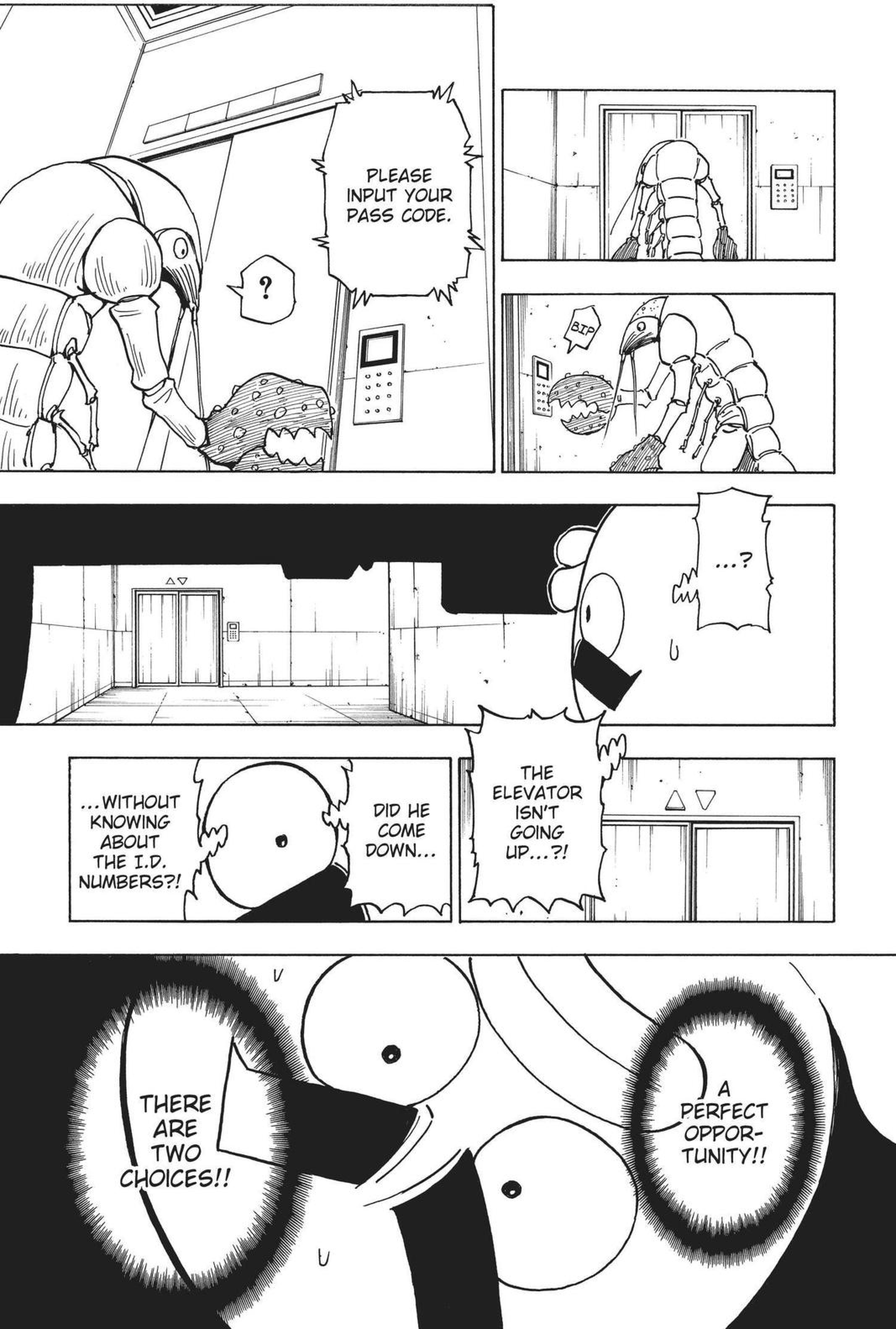

VROOMMM
!
RRK
HEY.
DID YOU FINISH YOUR JOB FOR HAGYA?
YES.
PRETTY MUCH.
...
HAGYA, HUH...
...

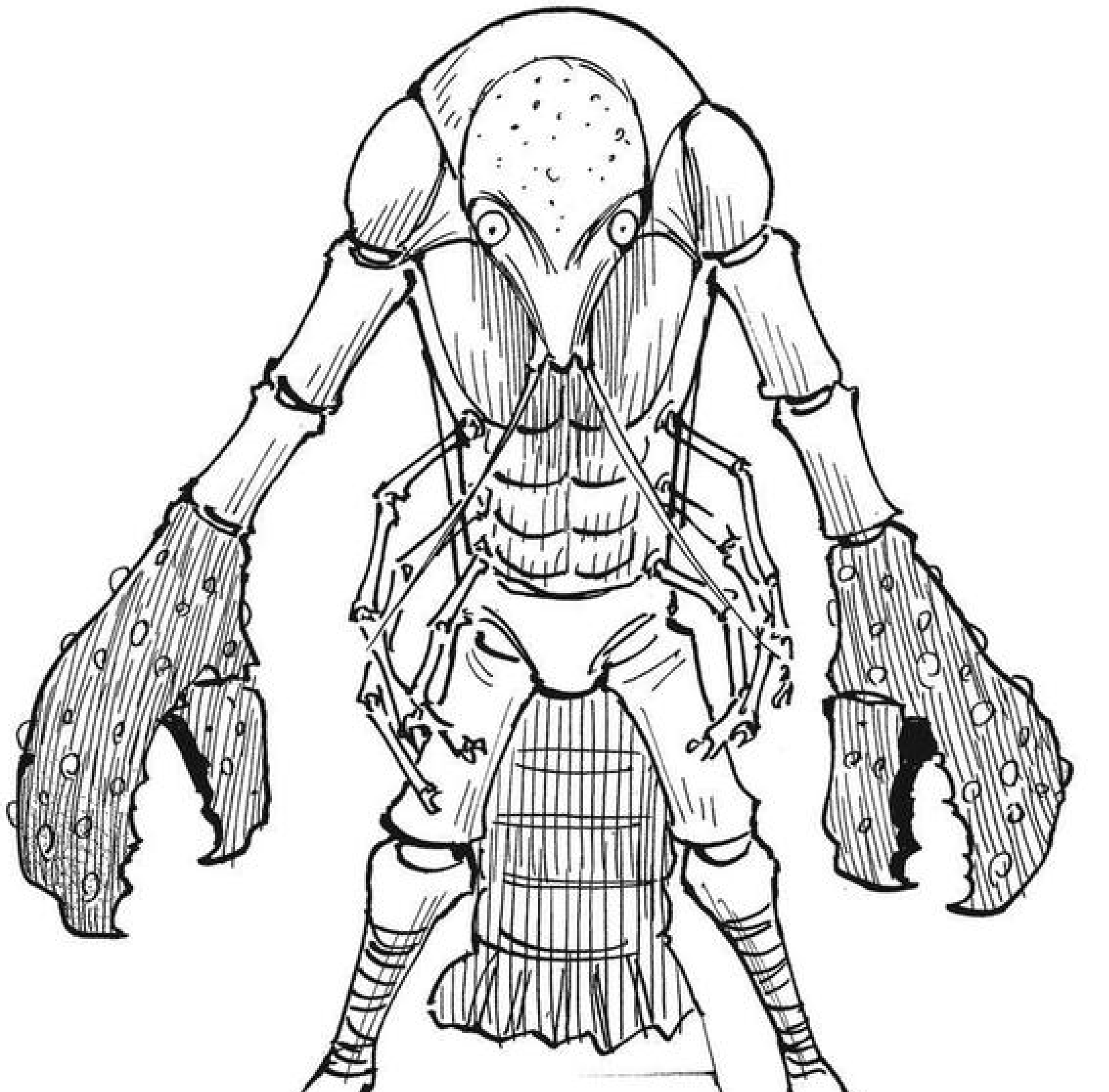

DOESN'T HE GET MAD WHEN WE CALL HIM THAT?
!!
DDDOM


THUD
SHF
SHF
THERE!
SO MUCH FOR THE IMPOSTOR!

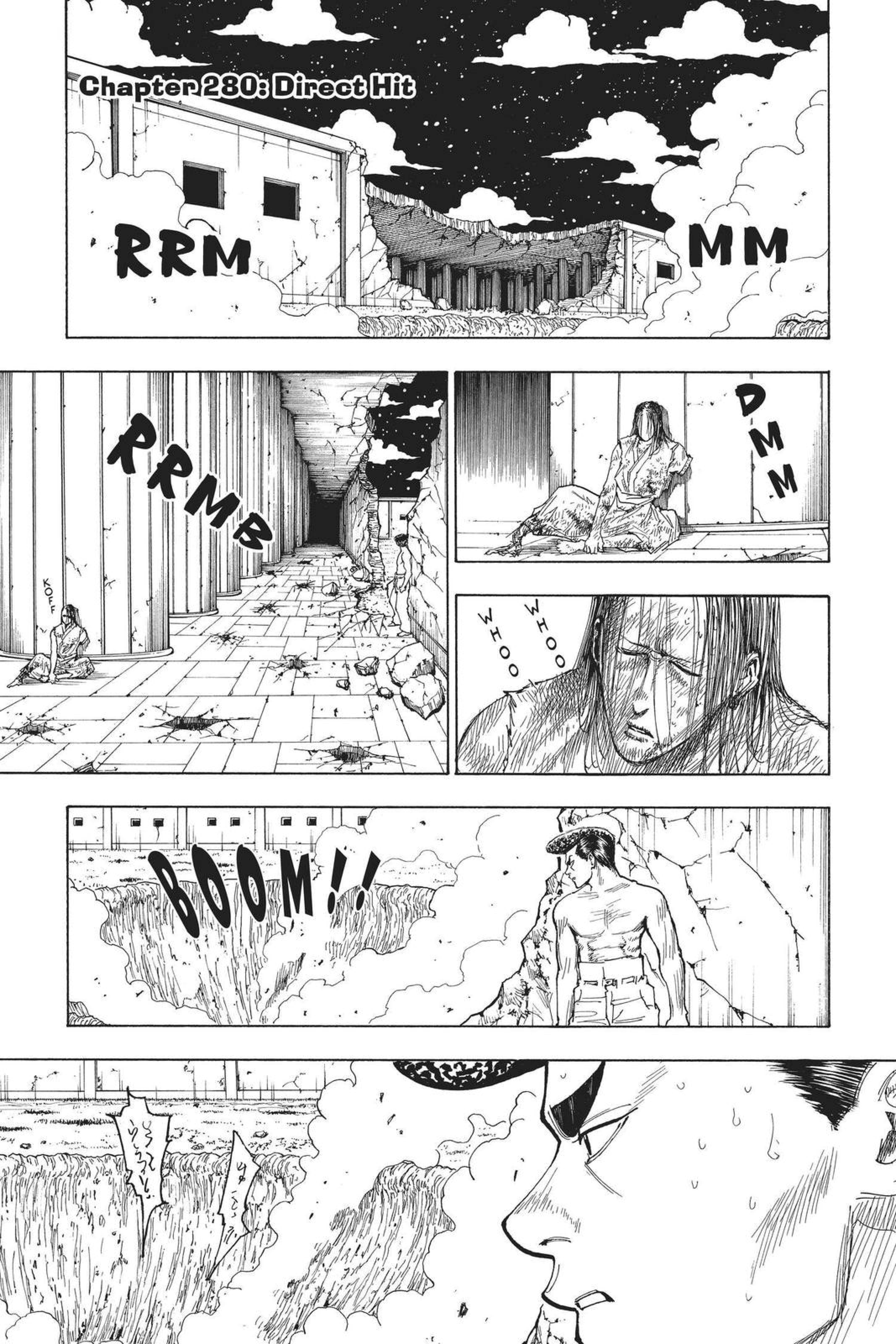

SHF
CHK
?
EMPTY?
...
OH WELL.
I'LL ASK HAGYA LATER.
...
NOW THEY THINK THE SUSPECT IS DEAD...!

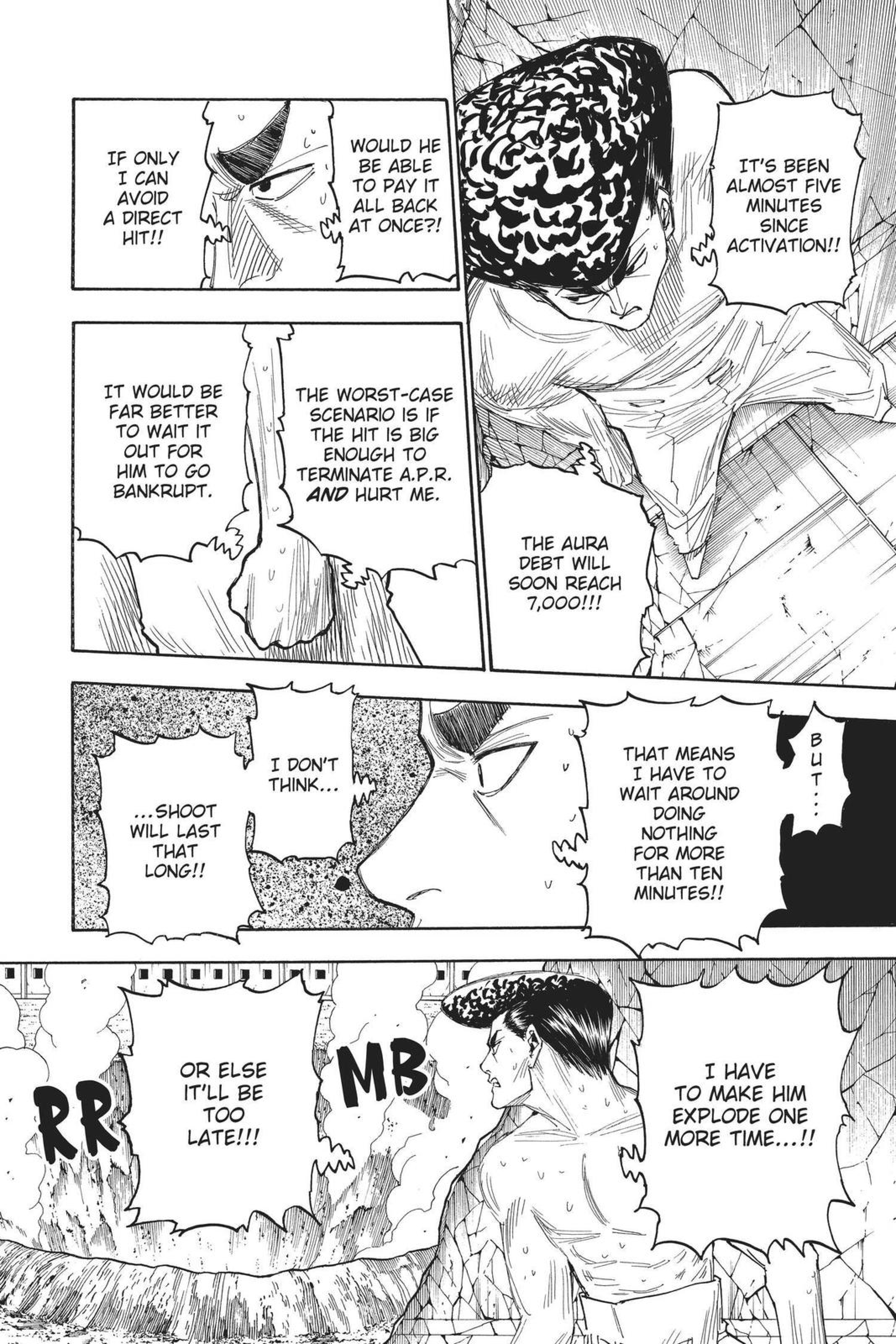

ONCE BLOSTER INFORMS THE OTHERS…
…I CAN MOVE FREELY!!
BUT *I* NEVER HEARD THAT HAGYA CHANGED HIS NAME! WHAT IS IT NOW?
WOULD THEY HAVE BELIEVED *ME* IF I HAD SAID THAT…
…EVEN IF I WAS TELLING THE TRUTH?
I SHOULD COME UP WITH AN EXCUSE IN CASE I CROSS THEIR PATHS…
…
…
NO, IT'S NO USE!!
BLOSTER WASN'T WASTING HIS BREATH WITH ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE HE ATTACKED!!
ANYONE WHO DOESN'T KNOW HAGYA'S NAME CHANGE IS AUTOMATICALLY BRANDED AN ENEMY!!!
IF THEY CATCH ME UPSTAIRS…
…I BETTER BE PREPARED FOR A SHOWDOWN!!

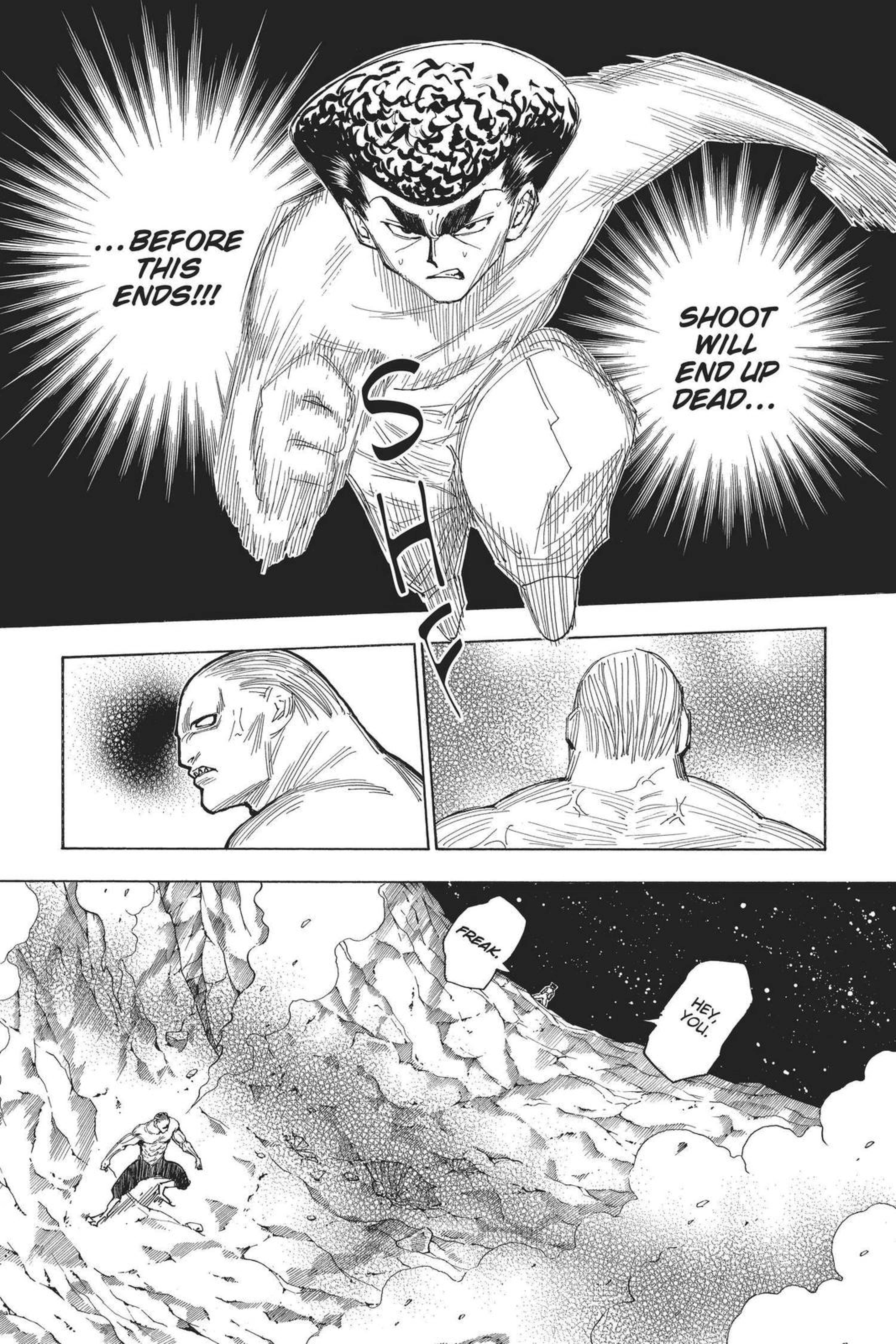

BIP
?
PLEASE INPUT YOUR PASS CODE.
...?
THE ELEVATOR ISN'T GOING UP...?!
DID HE COME DOWN...
...WITHOUT KNOWING ABOUT THE I.D. NUMBERS?!
A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY!!
THERE ARE TWO CHOICES!!

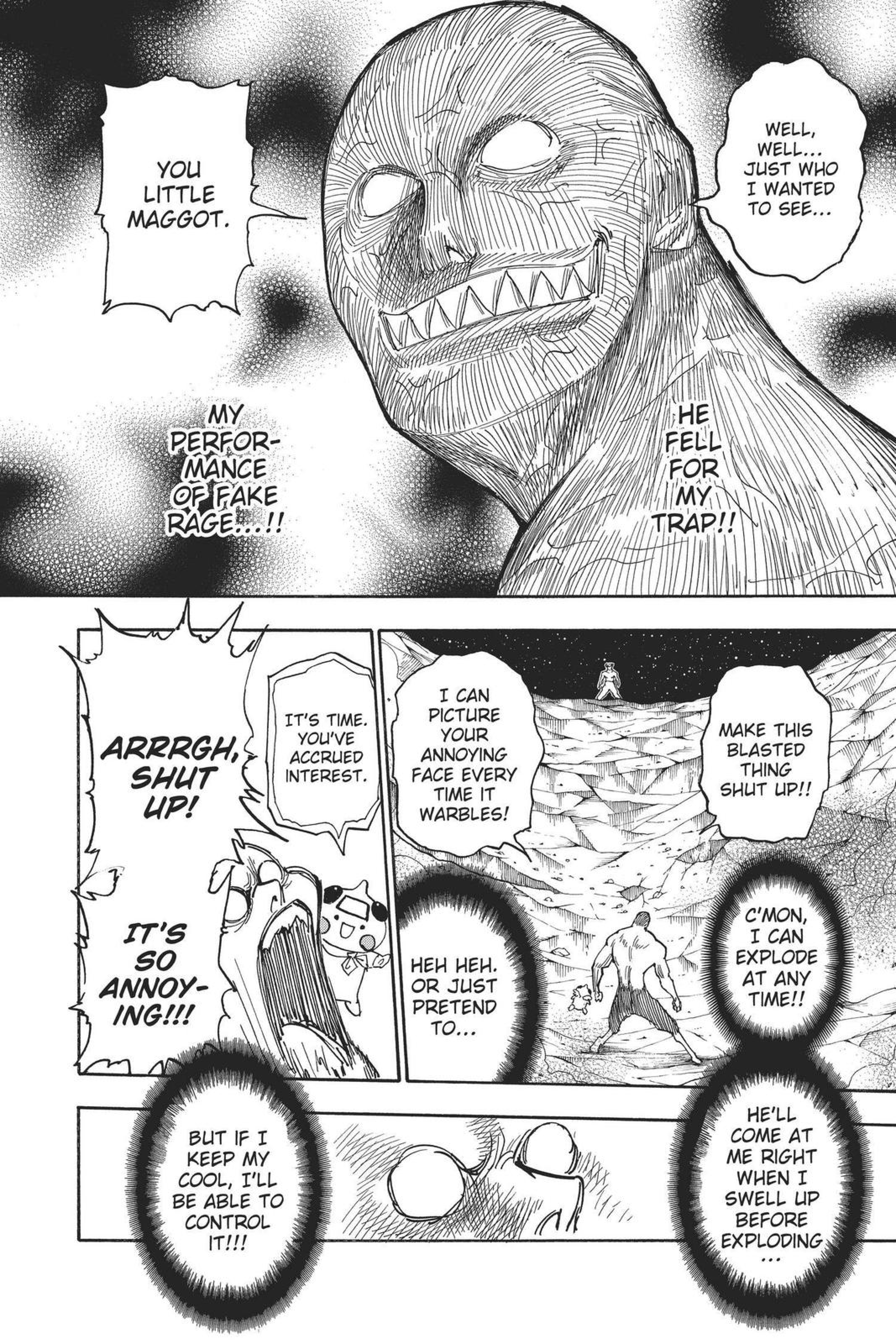


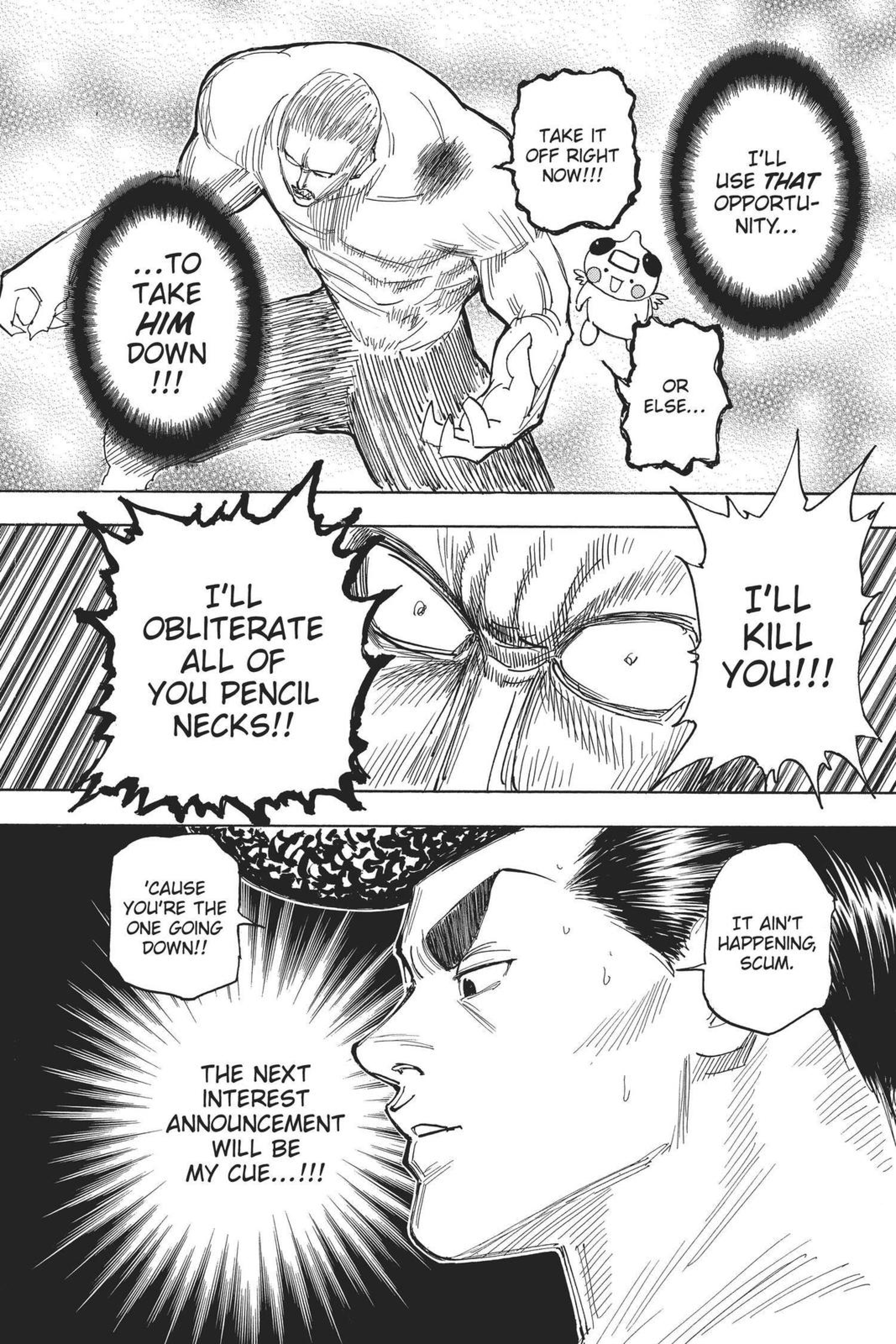
Chapter 280: Direct Hit

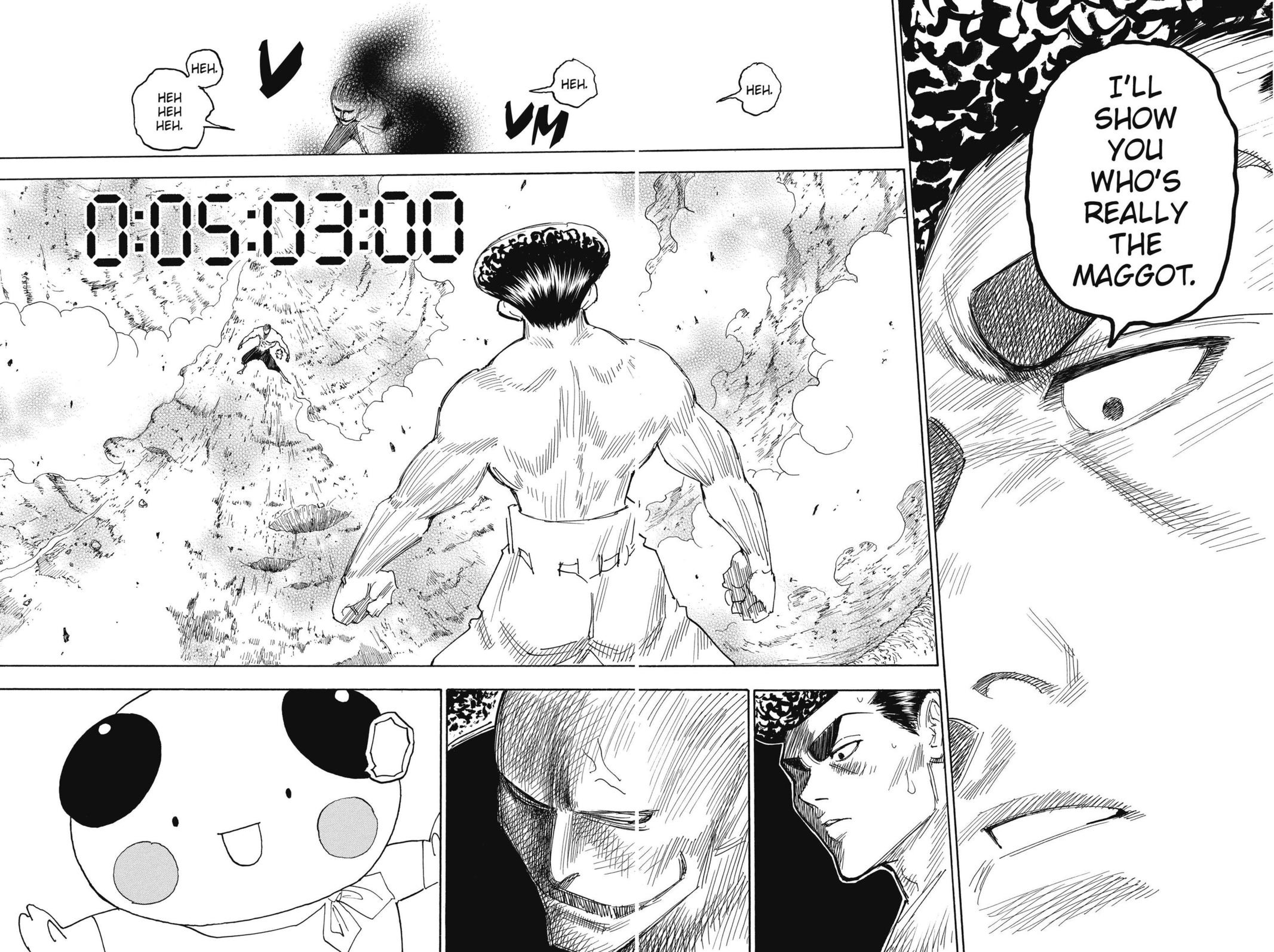

RRM
MM
DMM
RRMB
KOFF
WHOO
WHOO
BOOM!!

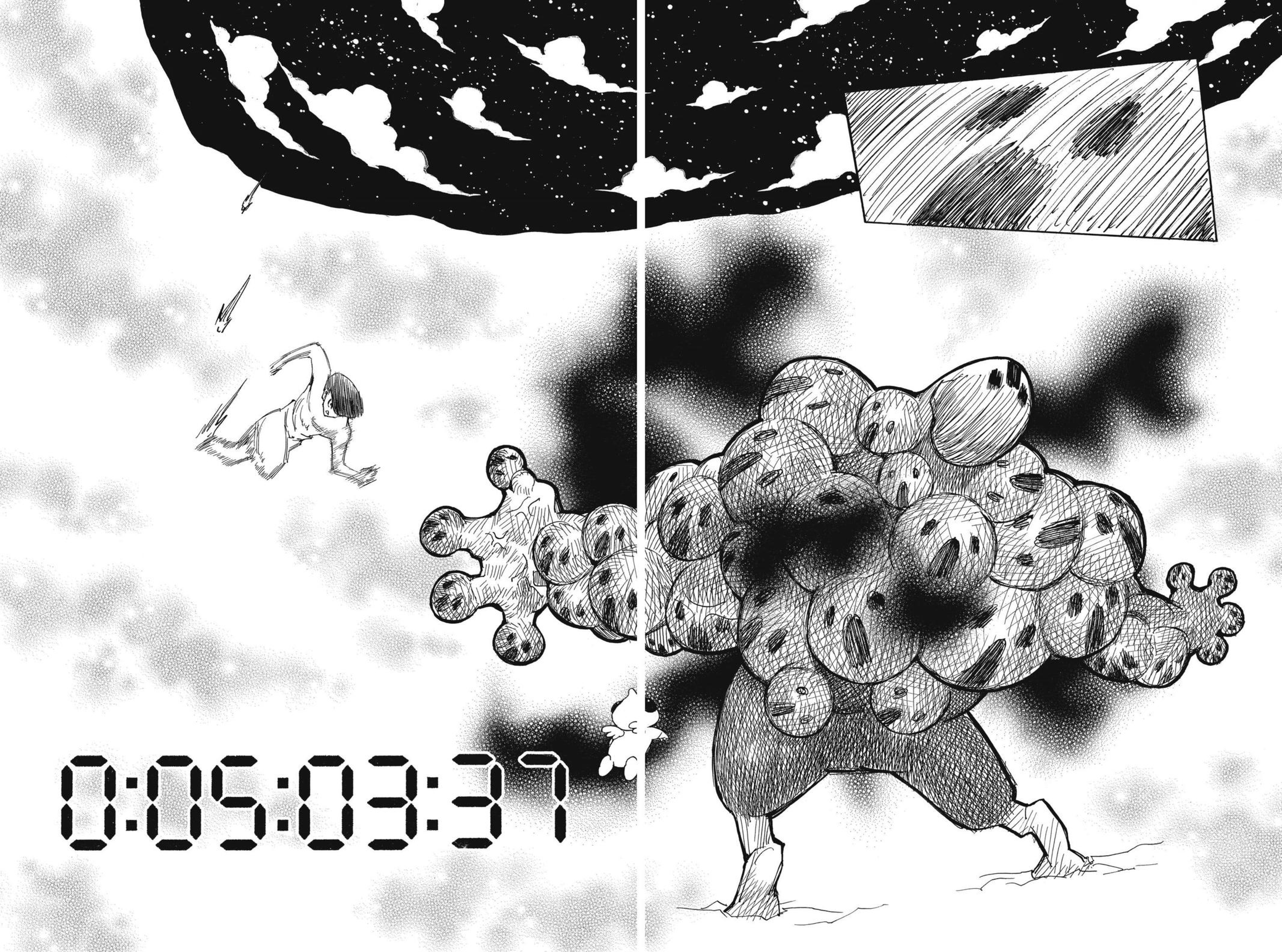

IT'S BEEN ALMOST FIVE MINUTES SINCE ACTIVATION!!
THE AURA DEBT WILL SOON REACH 7,000!!!
WOULD HE BE ABLE TO PAY IT ALL BACK AT ONCE?!
IF ONLY I CAN AVOID A DIRECT HIT!!
THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO IS IF THE HIT IS BIG ENOUGH TO TERMINATE A.P.R. **AND** HURT ME.
IT WOULD BE FAR BETTER TO WAIT IT OUT FOR HIM TO GO BANKRUPT.
BUT...
THAT MEANS I HAVE TO WAIT AROUND DOING NOTHING FOR MORE THAN TEN MINUTES!!
I DON'T THINK...
...SHOOT WILL LAST THAT LONG!!
I HAVE TO MAKE HIM EXPLODE ONE MORE TIME...!!
OR ELSE IT'LL BE TOO LATE!!!
RR
MB

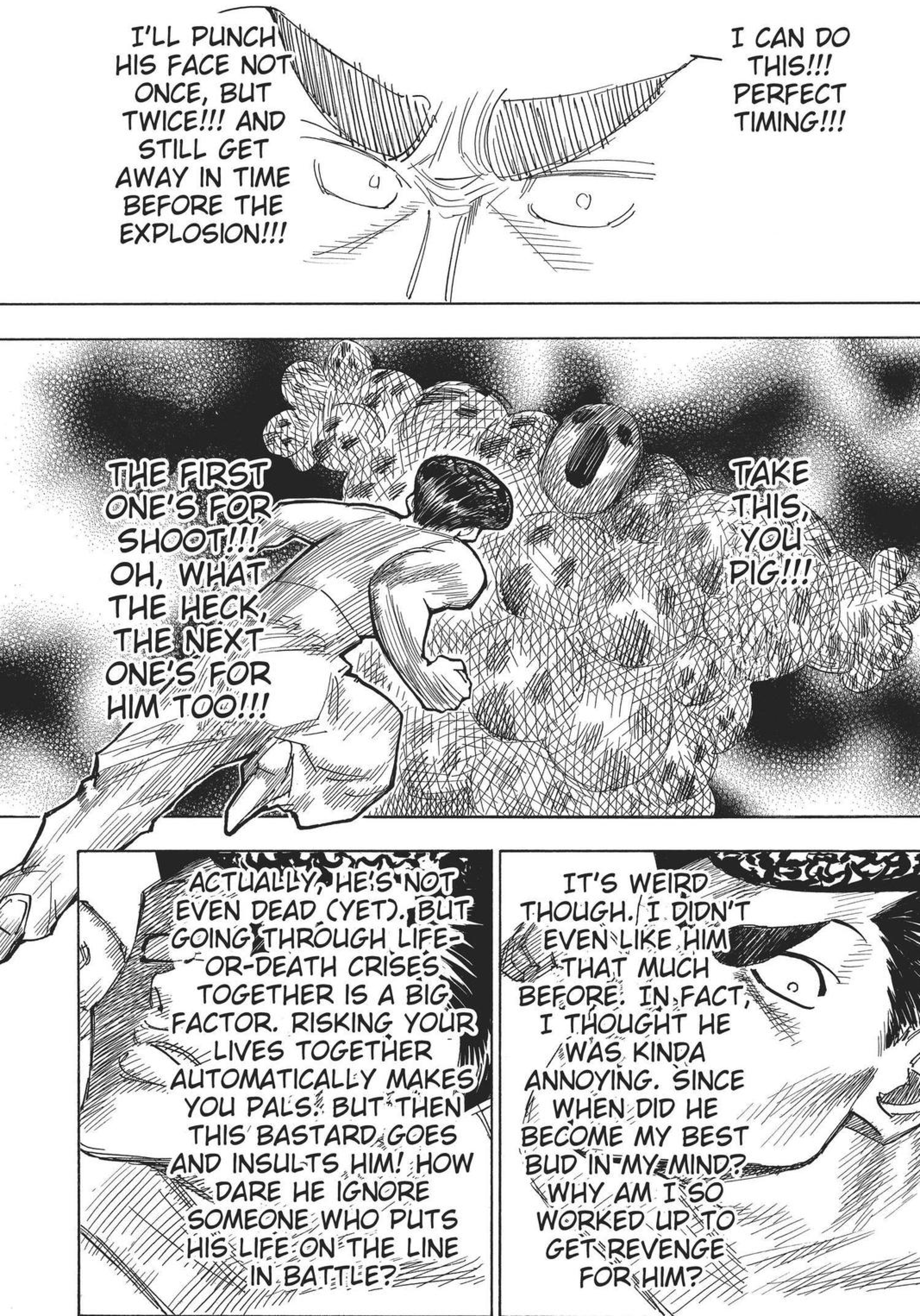

SHOOT WILL END UP DEAD...
...BEFORE THIS ENDS!!!
SHU
HEY, YOU.
FREAK.

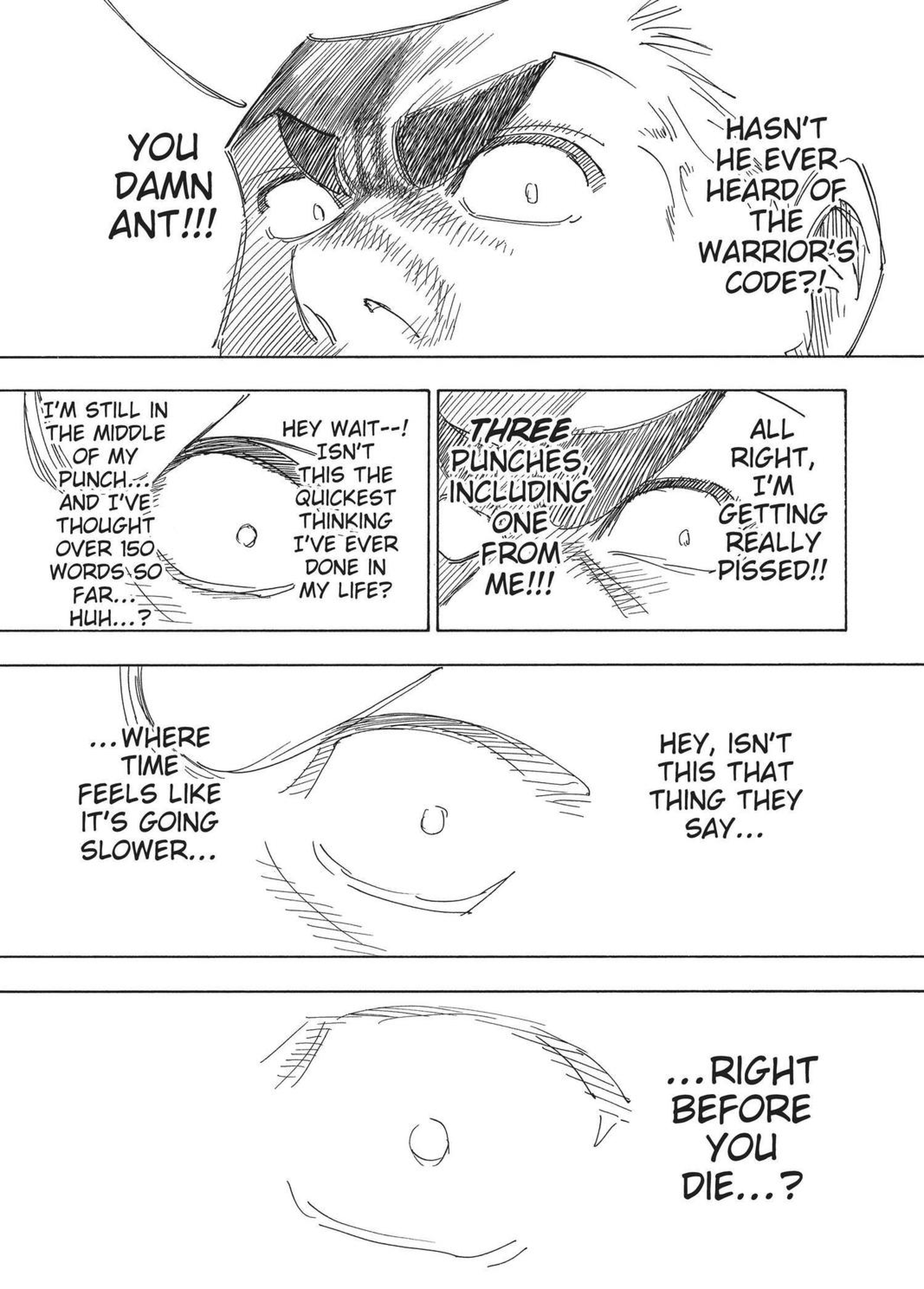

WELL, WELL... JUST WHO I WANTED TO SEE...
YOU LITTLE MAGGOT.
HE FELL FOR MY TRAP!!
MY PERFORMANCE OF FAKE RAGE...!!
MAKE THIS BLASTED THING SHUT UP!!
I CAN PICTURE YOUR ANNOYING FACE EVERY TIME IT WARBLES!
C'MON, I CAN EXPLODE AT ANY TIME!!
HEH HEH. OR JUST PRETEND TO...
IT'S TIME. YOU'VE ACCRUED INTEREST.
ARRRGH, SHUT UP!
IT'S SO ANNOYING!!!
HE'LL COME AT ME RIGHT WHEN I SWELL UP BEFORE EXPLODING...
BUT IF I KEEP MY COOL, I'LL BE ABLE TO CONTROL IT!!!

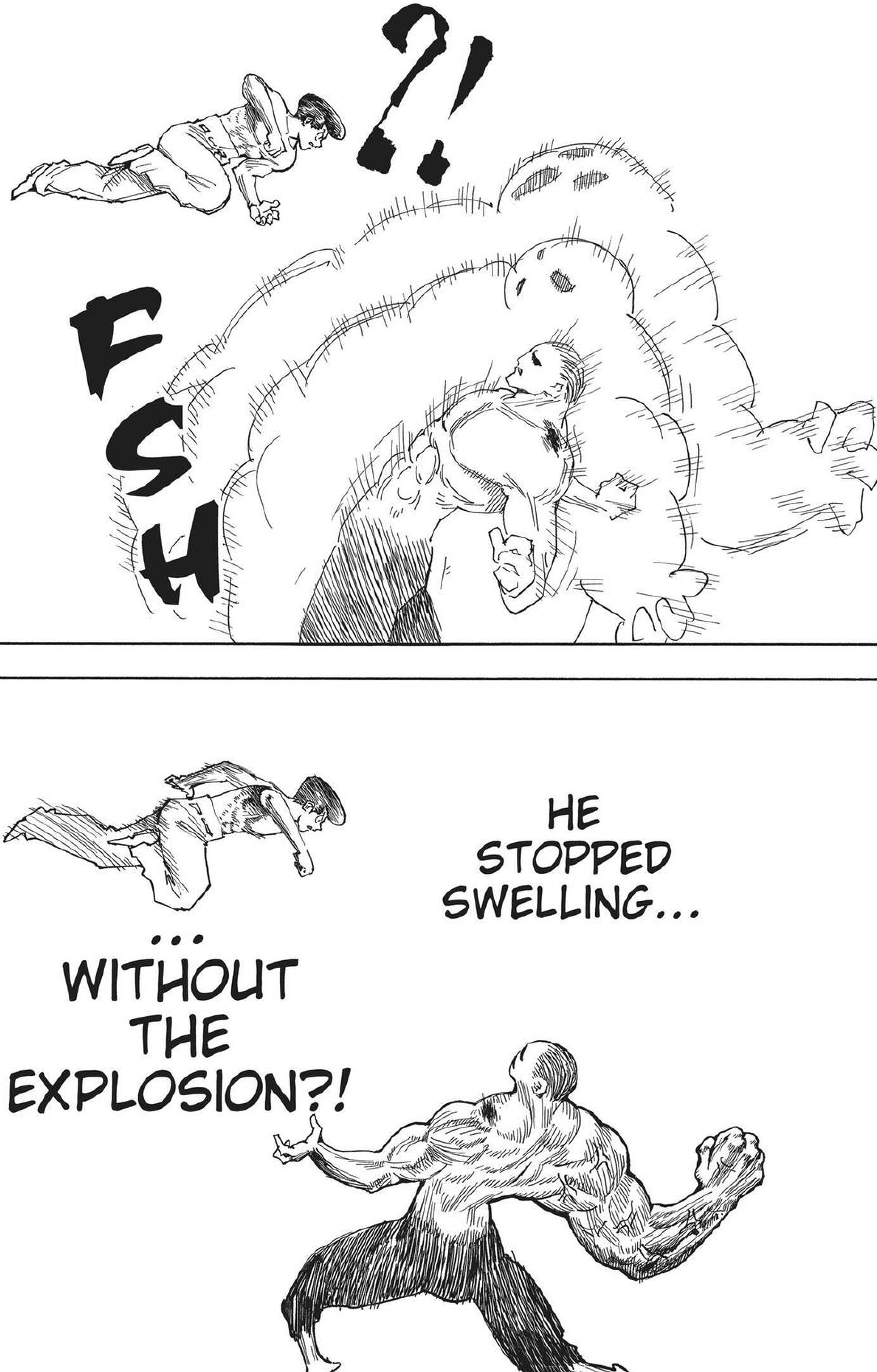

I'LL USE *THAT* OPPORTUNITY...
TAKE IT OFF RIGHT NOW!!!
OR ELSE...
...TO TAKE *HIM* DOWN!!!
I'LL KILL YOU!!!
I'LL OBLITERATE ALL OF YOU PENCIL NECKS!!
IT AIN'T HAPPENING, SCUM.
'CAUSE YOU'RE THE ONE GOING DOWN!!
THE NEXT INTEREST ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MY CUE...!!!

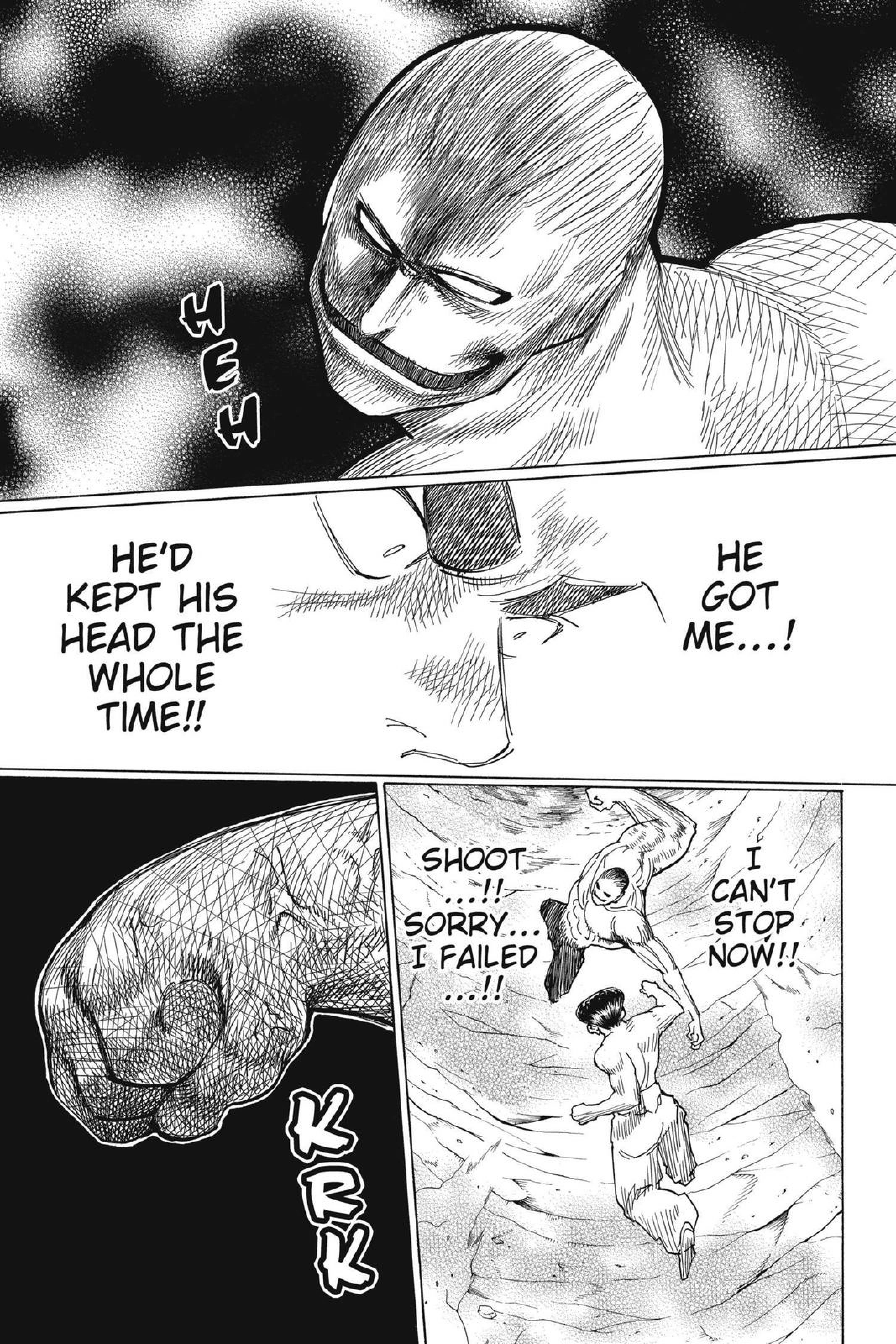

I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S REALLY THE MAGGOT.
HEH.
HEH.
VM
V
HEH. HEH HEH HEH.
0:05:03:00

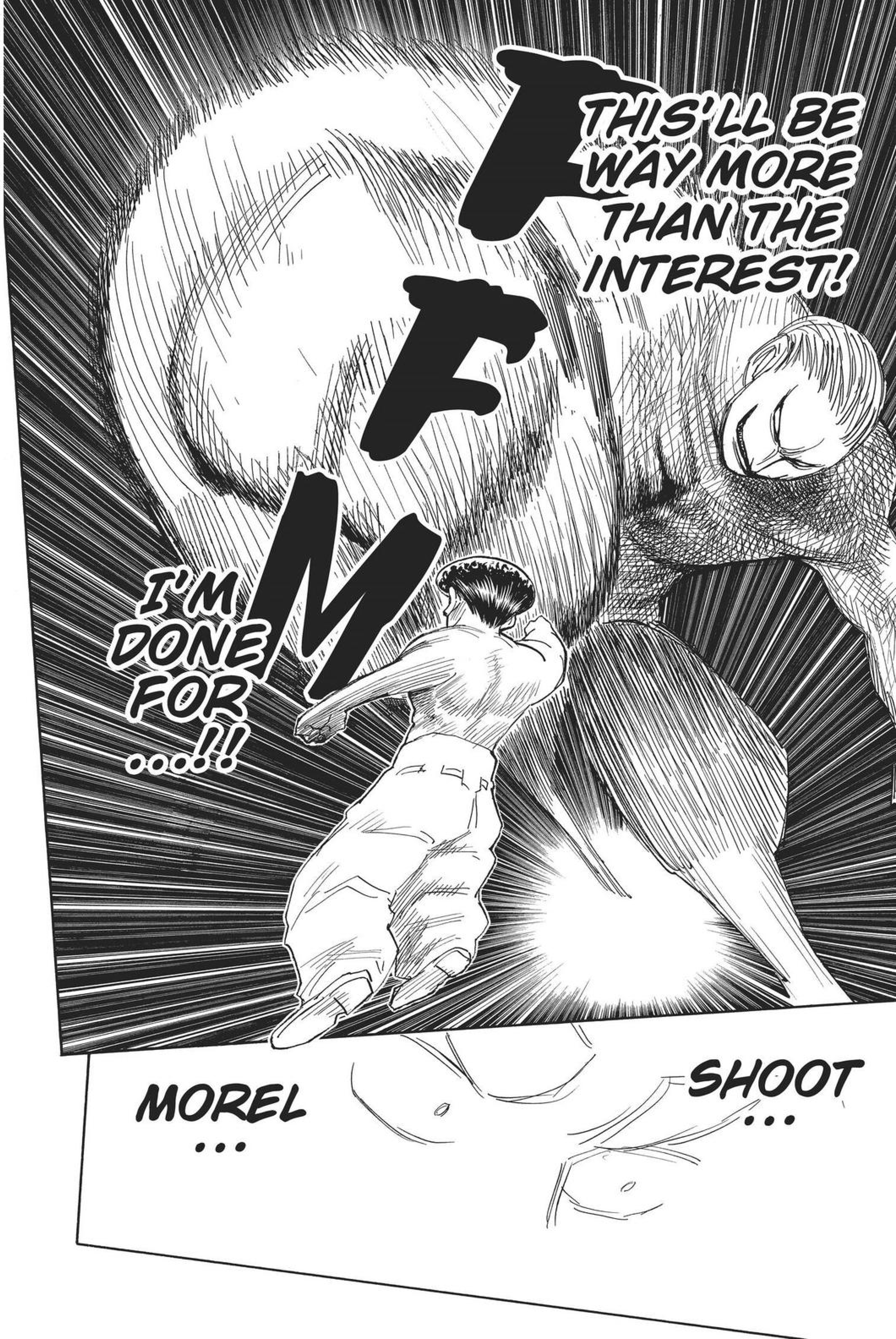

0:05:03:37


I CAN DO THIS!!! PERFECT TIMING!!!
I'LL PUNCH HIS FACE NOT ONCE, BUT TWICE!!! AND STILL GET AWAY IN TIME BEFORE THE EXPLOSION!!!
TAKE THIS, YOU PIG!!!
THE FIRST ONE'S FOR SHOOT!!! OH, WHAT THE HECK, THE NEXT ONE'S FOR HIM TOO!!!
IT'S WEIRD THOUGH. I DIDN'T EVEN LIKE HIM THAT MUCH BEFORE. IN FACT, I THOUGHT HE WAS KINDA ANNOYING. SINCE WHEN DID HE BECOME MY BEST BUD IN MY MIND? WHY AM I SO WORKED UP TO GET REVENGE FOR HIM?
ACTUALLY, HE'S NOT EVEN DEAD (YET). BUT GOING THROUGH LIFE-OR-DEATH CRISES TOGETHER IS A BIG FACTOR. RISKING YOUR LIVES TOGETHER AUTOMATICALLY MAKES YOU PALS. BUT THEN THIS BASTARD GOES AND INSULTS HIM! HOW DARE HE IGNORE SOMEONE WHO PUTS HIS LIFE ON THE LINE IN BATTLE?

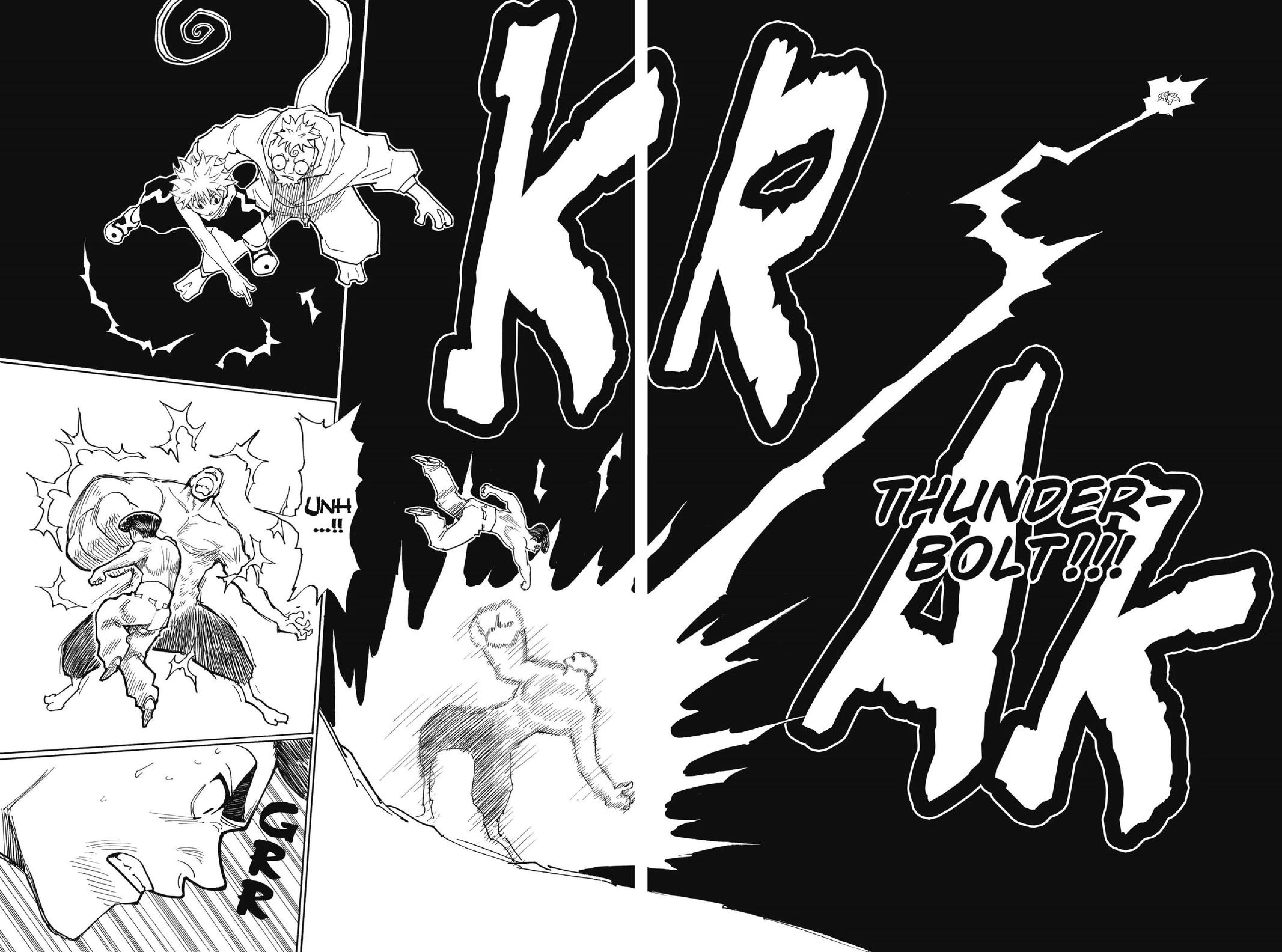

HASN'T HE EVER HEARD OF THE WARRIOR'S CODE?!
YOU DAMN ANT!!!
ALL RIGHT, I'M GETTING REALLY PISSED!!
THREE PUNCHES, INCLUDING ONE FROM ME!!!
HEY WAIT--! ISN'T THIS THE QUICKEST THINKING I'VE EVER DONE IN MY LIFE?
I'M STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF MY PUNCH... AND I'VE THOUGHT OVER 150 WORDS SO FAR... HUH...?
HEY, ISN'T THIS THAT THING THEY SAY...
...WHERE TIME FEELS LIKE IT'S GOING SLOWER...
...RIGHT BEFORE YOU DIE...?

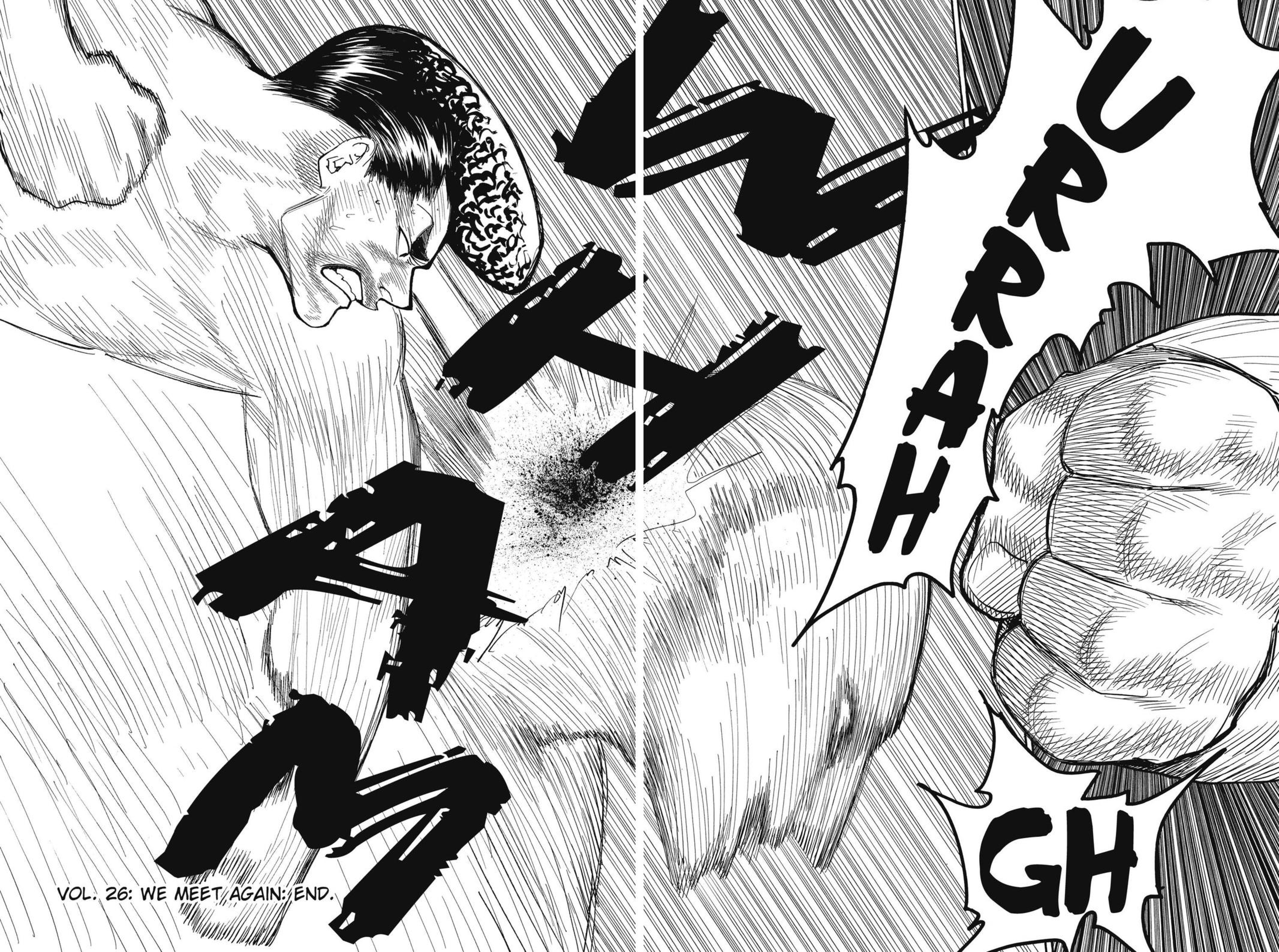

?!
FSH
HE STOPPED SWELLING…
… WITHOUT THE EXPLOSION?!


HEH
HE GOT ME...!
HE'D KEPT HIS HEAD THE WHOLE TIME!!
I CAN'T STOP NOW!!
SHOOT...!! SORRY... I FAILED...!!
KRK


THIS'LL BE WAY MORE THAN THE INTEREST!
FFM
I'M DONE FOR...!!
SHOOT...
MOREL...

EVERY-ONE...
I LEAVE THE REST TO YOU...!!!


THUNDER-BOLT!!!
KRAK
UNH...!!
GRR


URRRAH
GH
WHAM

VOL. 26: WE MEET AGAIN: END.